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November 29, 1999

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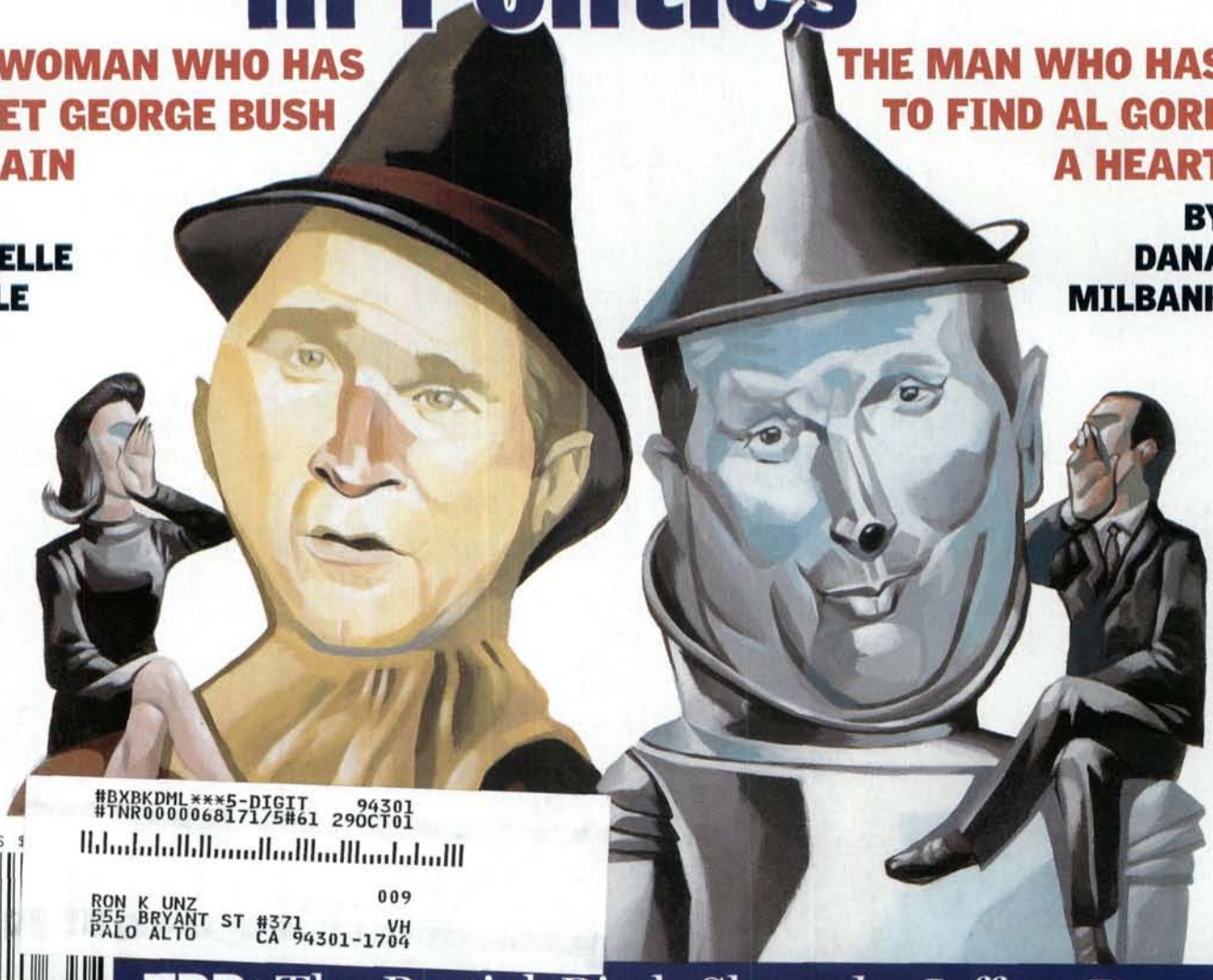

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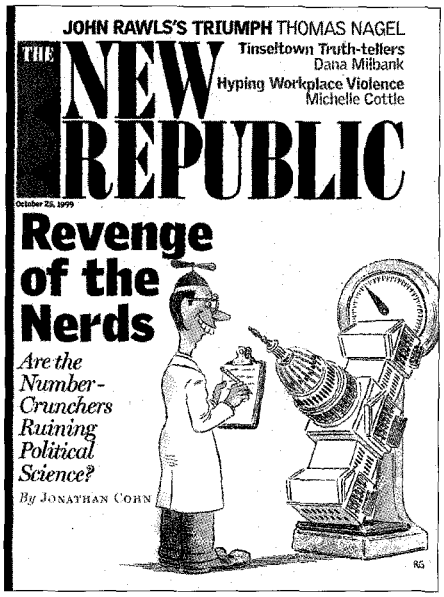
Rational exuberance

TO THE EDITORS:

I am the coauthor, with Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, of "The Rochester School: The Origins of Positive Political Theory" (*Annual Review of Political Science*, 1999), which Jonathan Cohn draws upon in his article ("Irrational Exuberance," October 25). Cohn's thesis—that "nerds" have "ruined political science" and know nothing about "real politics"—seems contradictory to his suggestion that the rational choice proponents have adopted "Genghis Khan" tactics and adroitly maneuvered to the top of their field.

Evincing nostalgia for accessible scholars like Wilson and Huntington, Cohn laments that the new wave of "number-crunching" theory is irrelevant to mainstream political concerns. However, his dismissal ignores the fact that rational-actor formalism structures discussions over democratization, global development, international finance, and the foundations of policy analysis. And it dominates the curricula of professional programs, including public policy, business, and, increasingly, law.

Rational choice theory in political science is consistent with a wide cultural



transformation toward technocracy in which decision-making is frequently in the hands of quantitatively minded analysts, whether they work for the Department of Defense or the World Bank. While Cohn raises awareness of the impact of rational choice within political science, his dismissal of the theory and its practitioners understates the significance of the discipline within the current economic and political milieu of the United States.

S.M. AMADAE
University of California, Berkeley

TO THE EDITORS:

I received a master's in public policy analysis from the University of Rochester. This graduate program was, until recently, embedded in the university's political science department. I still believe that rationalist methods of rigorous, mathematical analysis and research are important and useful tools in the political science and public policy field. However, I have seen the harm that the extremists in the rational choice field can cause by their "slash and burn" promotion of rationalist theory.

When William Riker founded the public policy program at the University of Rochester, it was clearly an attempt to provide a way for rational choice theory to have a real, positive impact on policy- and decision-making in government. By all accounts, the program has been remarkably successful. While small—about 40 graduate students and fewer than half a dozen full-time faculty—it was recently ranked fourteenth in the country. Its graduates are highly sought after by such government agencies as the Office of Management and Budget, the Congres-

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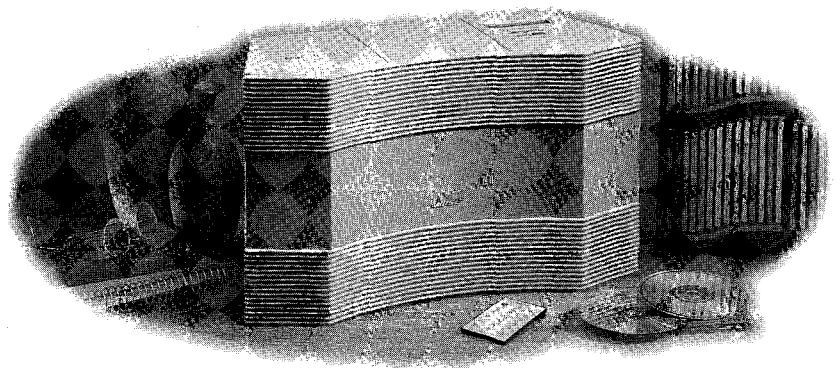

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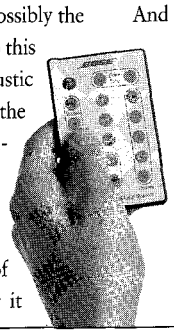

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sional Budget Office, and a host of other federal, state, and local agencies. However, the program, as viewed by the rational choice purists in the political science department, had a flaw: it was grounded in the empirical application of its work. Students were required to spend a semester working for outside parties, often local government agencies, learning to apply their skills and training to real-world problems. Their work was judged not on its discovery of theoretical insights but on its actual ability to help people make decisions that would improve government.

The extremist rational choice faction in the department openly scorned the quality and usefulness of the applied-policy program, viewing it as a threat to the rational choice empire they were promoting. The rational purists had blocked hiring and tenure decisions for policy faculty for years, opposing anyone who did not meet their standards for theoretical purity—standards that could not be met by anyone truly interested in furthering practical, applied public policy. This conflict broke the political science department into two feuding camps. In an effort to break this gridlock, the dean of the college, a computer scientist by training, yielded to the rational choice purists and dissolved the policy program, freeing up its faculty slots and funding for the rational choicers. All this came at a time when other universities were investing more heavily in their policy programs and when the program at Rochester drew many undergraduates to the university.

I was a second-year graduate student when this decision was made. The students and many graduates fought hard and loudly to try to reverse the decision. Now all I can offer is the recommendation that universities exercise great care when dealing with the extremists in the rational choice "cult." With membership in this cult comes a set of beliefs that will sacrifice anything, regardless of value or practicality, to pursue rational choice theory, even if it doesn't help a single policymaker reach a better decision.

WARREN PAYNE
Via the Internet

TO THE EDITORS:
Jonathan Cohn speaks of the effect upon graduate education of the rational choice emphasis but neglects to speak about undergraduates. Insofar as rational choice apparatchiks attend to undergraduates, their impact is disheartening.

There is little need for parents to worry any longer that universities, or at least political science departments, will make their kids too idealistic or quixotic. The worry now ought to be that they will come home too ferociously self-centered. Some years back, a colleague of mine who throws in with the rational choicers was asked by the local newspaper how he expected to vote in the coming national election. His answer was to the effect that he only voted in school board elections. I am sure he thought this was funny, but the answer was telling in its general disdain for politics and in its reflection of the rational choice position that voting is foolish—a message sent to our students.

LARRY PETERMAN
Professor of Political Science
University of California, Davis

TO THE EDITORS:
As a graduate student finishing my dissertation, I found many of Jonathan Cohn's observations and criticisms true to my own experience. But, while the rational choice theorists in our department and those I meet at conferences have "infiltrated" many of the subfields in the discipline, their influence may not be as all-encompassing as Cohn contends.

Woodrow Wilson, I suspect, would find that little groundbreaking work of the magnitude common to physics or other "hard sciences" has occurred since he was president of our discipline-wide association. But many scholars are pushing the intellectual bounds by combining the ideas of the formal modelers with traditional inquiries begun by the behaviorists and institutional scholars. It is not so much that we have to adapt to rational choice to survive as that we must incorporate multiple models into our research. We pointy-headed academics do know how to adapt—Cohn makes that much clear.

DAVE MCCUAN
University of California, Riverside

TO THE EDITORS:
Jonathan Cohn's article on rational choice presented a deeply inaccurate view of the discipline of political science. Rational choice theorists do not dominate the discipline, although their opponents frequently claim that they do. It is worth noting that, despite Cohn's claims that rational choicers band together to keep other types out of departments, his only concrete example of someone being banished owing to methodology is at Harvard University, allegedly a solid bastion of rational choice, where two rational choice theorists were denied tenure because their methodology was undesirable. Who, the critical reader might ask, is oppressing whom?

Cohn also makes the all-too-common mistake of conflating rational choice and quantitative (mathematical) work. Simply put, not all quantitative research is rational choice research, and not all rational

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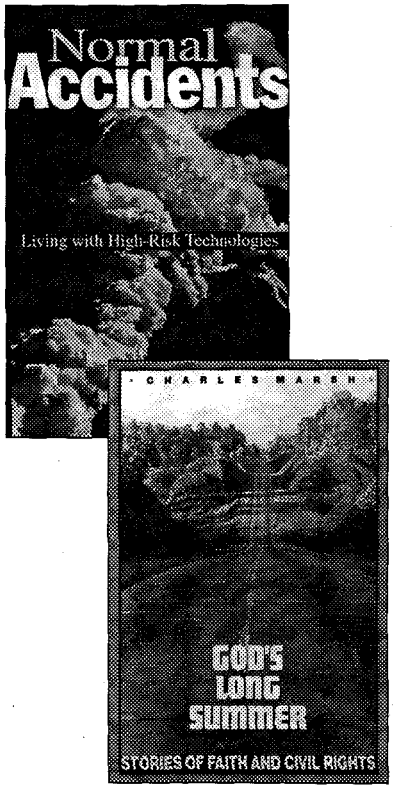

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FROM WASHINGTON

Sideshow

JUST IN TIME for the presidential election, abortion may be headed again for the Supreme Court. In the wake of lurid hearings in Congress in 1995, 30 states have passed laws banning partial-birth abortion, a politically inflammatory but rarely used procedure. Judges have struck down the bans in two-thirds of the states and haven't interfered in the rest. The cases show how state legislatures, by focusing on an emotional sideshow, are ducking the question that both parties are afraid to face: Are there really circumstances in which a woman can be required to carry a viable fetus to term against her will?

In 1992, the Supreme Court said yes. The Constitution protects a woman's right to choose abortion before fetal viability, the Court held, but after viability the question of whether or not to ban abortion is up to the states. But the invitation to debate the legitimacy of post-viability abortion is something that extreme pro-choicers and pro-lifers have both refused to accept. (The pro-choicers reject any restrictions on principle; the pro-lifers don't have the votes to pass them in practice.) As a result, both sides have embraced the partial-birth diversion with a sigh of relief.

Most of the cases focus on a graphic but highly technical dispute: Do the laws in question ban only the partial-birth abortion procedure, known as dilation and extraction (D&X), or are they drafted so vaguely that they also ban the most common procedure for second-trimester abortions, known as dilation and evacuation (D&E)? I'll spare you the gory details, which tend to discourage clear thinking. Suffice it to say that the two procedures are distinguished mainly by whether the fetus is killed before or after it is removed from the uterus. Fetal viability begins around the end of the second trimester, and, in striking down the bans on partial-birth abortion, courts have concluded that the laws might forbid the D&E as well as the D&X procedure, thereby imposing an undue burden on a woman's constitutional right to choose abortion before viability.

At the end of October, in his opinion for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, Judge Frank Easterbrook upheld partial-birth laws in Illinois and Wisconsin after construing them to prohibit only the D&X procedure. In the process, he usefully focused the constitutional and political questions. As a policy matter, the movement to ban the partial-birth procedure is a distraction, just as the effort to ban the electric chair as a form of cruel and unusual punishment—which the Supreme Court has just agreed to review—is a distraction in the death-penalty debate. By focusing on a graphic (and rarely used) procedure, abortion and death-penalty opponents hope to inflame the public and the courts, even though the practical and moral differences between the prohibited and the permitted methods of killing are murky, and it's not clear that a single life is saved as a result.

In an acerbic dissent, Chief Judge Richard Posner suggested that because the D&X and D&E procedures are medically hard to distinguish (the difference may depend on which way the fetus's feet are pointing), an effort to ban one and permit the other should be struck down as irrational. But this seems a little free-wheeling: Why couldn't a rational legislator conclude that a ban on partial-birth abortions—like a legislative declaration that life begins at conception—is a symbolic act intended not to prohibit actual abortions but to express respect for the views of those who believe abortion is murder?

The stronger constitutional objection is that the Illinois and Wisconsin laws include an exception allowing the D&X procedure in emergencies during which the mother's life is at risk but make no similar exception for her health. This objection might seem decisive; in the Casey decision in 1992, the Supreme Court reaffirmed *Roe* v. *Wade*'s holding that states are free to prohibit abortion after fetal viability as long as they make exceptions in cases where an abortion "is necessary, in appropriate medical judgment, for the preservation of the life or health of the mother." Easterbrook, however, deferred to a Wisconsin judge who concluded, based on the testimony of one Dr. Giles, that the D&X procedure is never medically necessary to preserve a woman's health. In his dissent, Posner ridiculed "the dubious Dr. Giles" and noted that an Illinois judge had come to the opposite conclusion about the medical evidence.

If a court remains uncertain about whether a partial-birth law adequately protects women's health, what should it do? One possibility, as Posner suggested, would be to interpret the law's life exception to include health as well. But this exercise in judicial charity would thwart the wishes of the legislature, which apparently believes that a viable fetus's interest in life is more important than marginal threats to a woman's health. Another possibility would be to strike down the law and send it back to the legislature, which would then have a second chance to spell out which specific threats to a woman's health could override a viable fetus's interest in life. Balancing the interests of a viable fetus against the interests of its mother is a quintessentially legislative judgment about which the Constitution provides no meaningful guidance. Rather than usurping it, judges should force legislators to put themselves on record and accept the political consequences.

In the forthcoming constitutional battle, the Supreme Court may decide to clarify how much discretion legislators have in this explosive area. In 1997, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit struck down a partial-birth-abortion ban, noting that the Ohio law in question contained an exception for the mother's physical health but not her mental health. In the 1970s, the Supreme Court interpreted maternal health to include psychological and emotional well-being. Based on this broad definition, the Sixth Circuit predicted that today's Court would hold that a woman has a right to abortion whenever carrying the child to term would pose a serious threat to her mental health. If the Court agrees that the Constitution requires a mental-health exception to late-term-abortion restrictions, it will undermine the central holding of the Casey decision, which stressed that, after viability, the fetus's interest in life may trump the mother's potential distress.

In *Roe* v. *Wade*, judges acted like legislators. But in the partial-birth debate, legislators have been acting like judges—condemning a particular procedure as cruel and unusual while refusing to prohibit medically indistinguishable alternatives. This serves the interests of the Republican Party, allowing state legislators to gesture symbolically toward anti-abortion abolitionists without necessarily prohibiting a single abortion. But, if it resolves the partial-birth sideshow, the Supreme Court should make clear that the political branches alone can decide precisely when a women may be forced to carry a viable fetus to term. By avoiding its error in *Roe* and requiring legislators rather than judges to legislate, the Court might even expose the weakness of the extreme pro-lifers. When legislators contemplate the march on Washington that would be triggered by abortion restrictions that actually affect women's lives, many Republicans may run in the opposite direction.

JEFFREY ROSEN

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

Lessons in Courage

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

Americans who question the value of voting and participating in public affairs should look at what's happened in other countries. In places as far apart as Russia, Colombia, and Italy, criminal organizations exercise enormous power over the institutions that people rely on for safe and orderly lives. They enforce a new form of authoritarianism, where citizens are kept out of decision-making, their voices ignored.

In Palermo, Italy, for example, the Mafia used violence, terror, and intimidation to maintain control over a frightened and demoralized public. But the people of Palermo demonstrated that the public can fight back, and they can win. People can make their institutions serve the public good rather than the greed of a band of criminals. Exercising the right of free association—the right to organize protests, or to freely join civic and political organizations, churches, and trade unions—is the key.

Citizens Lived in Fear

Ten years ago, although Palermo had an elected city government, the real power resided with the Mafia bosses who controlled public services and city contracts and most business that went on in the city. The Mafia had penetrated the police force, the courts, and almost all the institutions of civil democratic society, making them little more than vehicles for criminal activity and profits.

Through brute force and murder, the Mafia took Palermo's lifeblood. Tax dollars meant for schools, housing, and the restoration of public monuments were diverted to the pockets of the Mafia. Ancient churches, museums, and public buildings were left to rot. The beautiful old opera house was closed; housing built for poor families crumbled. The very water people drank came from wells drilled by taxpayers' money but owned by the Mafia. The economy—which depended on the right of free expression and free association to operate efficiently—stagnated. When it came to civic affairs, most citizens lived in fear behind their curtains and closed doors.

But some brave souls—dissidents of a sort, including a handful of remarkable prosecutors, magistrates, and policemen—fought on. Two magistrates in particular, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, heroically pursued the Mafia and eventually became martyrs in the cause of freedom. Civic society had already begun slowly to reassert itself, but with the murders of Falcone and Borsellino, the citizens of Palermo were galvanized and took to the streets. Women hung bed sheets out the windows with the word *Basta!* (Enough!) written on them. United in their anger and revulsion, the people of Palermo began to be a community again. They formed groups and associations, and with great courage, began to take their city back.

Palermo's battle against the Mafia became a real-life civics course.

A year after the murders, Palermo elected Leoluca Orlando, a reformist mayor who won 75 percent of the vote, and the city began to accelerate on the difficult road back to democracy and civil society. At great risk to his life and that of his family, the mayor took on the leaders of the Mafia. And backed by the people of Palermo, he won, leading to their arrest, conviction, and imprisonment. He worked to rebuild trust in the processes of lawful society, where people could freely associate without fear.

Restoring Trust in the Law

Mayor Orlando made a point of involving Palermo's teachers and students. One of his initiatives was a "curriculum of lawfulness"—like one of our civics courses but with a special urgency. The children of Palermo needed to learn that the Mafia was responsible for the violence that permeated the city and that those who informed on them were heroes, not traitors. They needed to learn that obeying the law is the right thing to do and that flouting it destroys a society at its roots. (Something America's teachers want all our students to understand as well.)

School children also became a part of the mayor's program to rebuild the city center, which during the years of Mafia control had become a wasteland of decaying and abandoned churches and palaces filled with rubbish. Schools were encouraged to "adopt" historic buildings, learn about their past, and help in their rehabilitation. Students used their newfound expertise as tour guides. Today, Palermo is once again safe and beautiful and a source of pride. The restored Massimo opera house is a wonder to behold. The economy is improving.

In a real sense, the citizens of Palermo were engaged in a war against totalitarianism and terror. Their story can and should be an inspiration to everyone who believes in the basic right of men and women to organize and associate freely. Corruption and organized crime are grave, pernicious threats to democracy. But with determination, leadership, and a citizenry prepared to fight for the values of a free society, democracy can overcome. ▮

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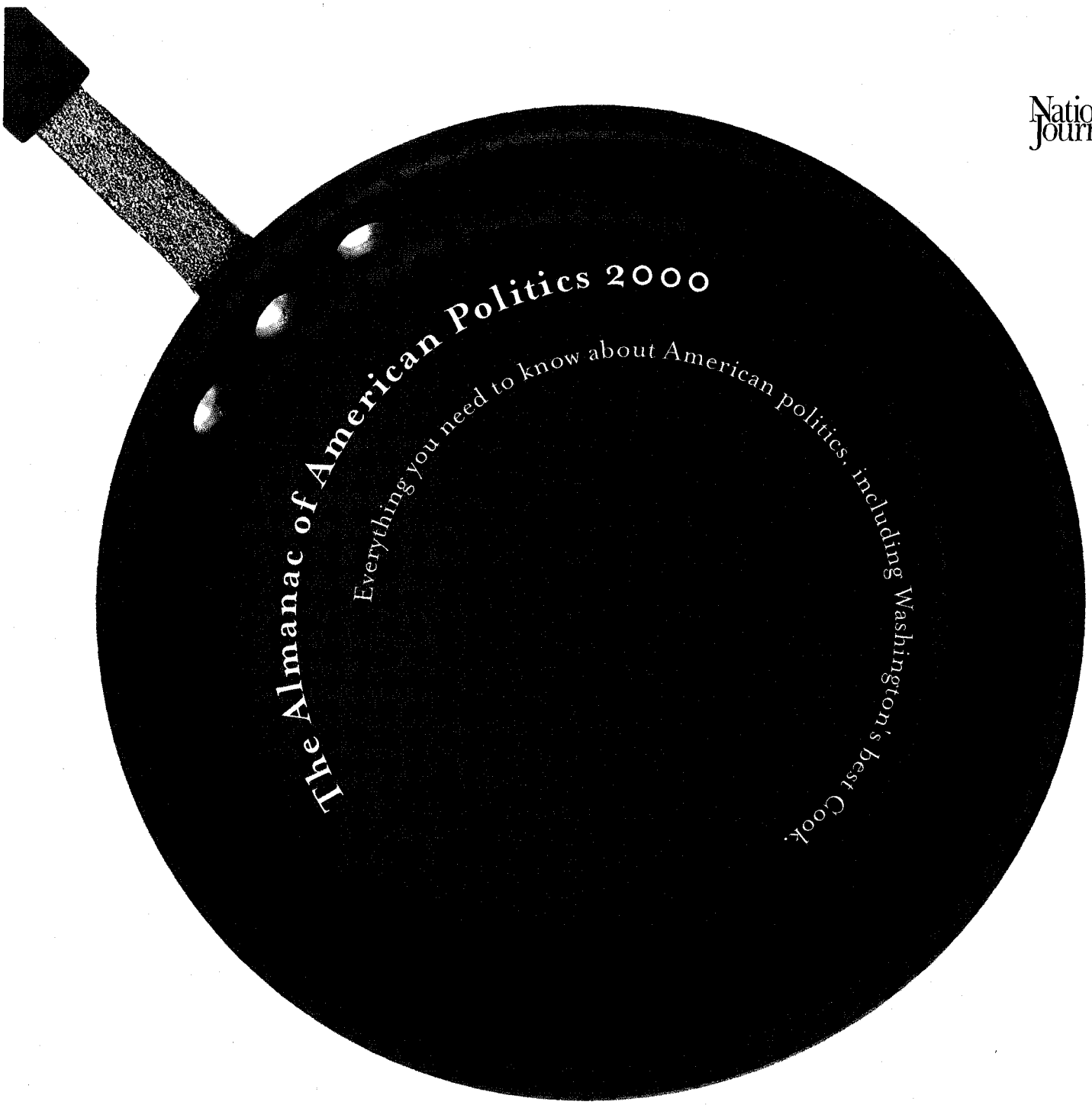
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Grudge Genocide

"YOU AND I live in the East, not the West," Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin jingoistically told a Russian audience recently. "We have to decide for ourselves what we want: to get credits to buy lollipops or agree to an annexation of our territory from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea." Putin was defending the Russian war on Chechnya against Western criticism. It was more than a little unsettling to hear the cheap vocabulary of reactionary nationalism from the leader of Boris Yeltsin's government—the same government that has been protesting for most of a decade that it lives in the West, not the East. The long-suffering suits at the International Monetary Fund will be interested to hear of the Russian government's loss of interest in lollipops.

In truth, Putin's belligerent outburst was nothing but the rankest cynicism. It is not lost upon the prime minister that he is profiting politically from the atrocity in the Caucasus (he scored a magnificent 29 percent in last week's poll about presidential candidates); and it is not lost upon anyone else that he is now at the mercy of Russia's generals. The new Russian assault on Chechnya has brought together many of the most alarming traits of the new Russia, and one of them is the increasingly agitated state of the Russian military. The "officer corps of Russia will not stand for another slap in the face," the commander of the Russian forces in western Chechnya resentfully told a Russian newspaper. He was referring to the Russian army's defeat in Chechnya in 1994–1996, when 6,000 Russian soldiers were killed and Russian forces were driven ignominiously out of the land of the Chechens by warriors straight out of Tolstoy. The Russian generals explain that defeat (which also killed 50,000 Chechens) with a stab-in-the-back theory about the Russian politicians. The soldiers could have won, but the Kremlin lost its nerve. This time, the general in western Chechnya warned, the consequence of an order from the Kremlin to "stop the army . . . would be a massive defection of officers of all ranks from the armed forces, including the generals."

This is a situation, then, with all sorts of foul historical odors. And the wasting of Chechnya—for that is what is taking place before our eyes—is something new in the annals of modern atrocity: a grudge genocide, or something close. "We're not going to let the brotherhood down," a Russian soldier in Chechnya ominously announced on television. "The [Chechens] have a blood vendetta. So do we." The objective of the Russian campaign is total victory. Chechnya is to remain in Russia no matter how many Chechens have to die. Savagery is the Russian strategy: the slow Russian advance into Chechnya was prepared by a vicious air and artillery assault. At first the Russians pretended that the campaign was designed to prevent the loss of civilian life, but Putin admitted on October 31 that there "might have been some mistakes" during the bombings. Grozny—the capital of the Chechen republic, where the democratically elected government of Aslan Maskhadov sits—is now besieged. The Russians have opened and closed and opened the border between Chechnya and Ingushetia capriciously, producing 200,000 refugees. On November 9, Russia banned foreign trade with Chechnya and suspended foreign flights to the region, isolating the bloodied republic even more. The area has long been too perilous for humanitarian workers, but the reports from the refugees describe a terrible slaughter. With the exception of Grigory Yavlinsky, the leader of the liberal Yabloko Party, the actions of the Russian government have provoked no Russian dissent. And negotiations are out of the question, according to the Kremlin. "While he supports terrorists," the Russian prime minister said of the Chechen president, "it is unlikely that anyone will talk to him." By "terrorists," Putin means Chechens.

"The Chechen people have huge hopes that the United States will use its authority to defend human rights." That melancholy sentence was uttered by Maskhadov on November 7, as reported by the Interfax news agency. The poor president had better reconcile himself to low hopes. For the Clinton administration does not defend human rights in big countries. It has protested this and that about the Russian depravity in Chechnya: the State Department objected that the Russian attacks have been "indiscriminate," and also that they violate the Geneva Conventions. But foreign policy, remember, is not social work. Also, the Clinton administration has a near-mystical belief in the Yeltsin government, even though it is headed by a near-dead man. There is no evidence to date that the United States will respond to the Russian crime by curtailing any aid or cooperation at all. Is the Russian offensive in Chechnya an internal Russian affair? Of course it is, in the way that the Yugoslav offensive in Kosovo was an internal Yugoslav affair. But this time Milosevic-like deeds by Milosevic's allies will provoke only scolding followed by winking. Even if we do live in the West, not the East. ■

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NOTEBOOK

SCENES FROM THE CLASS STRUGGLE: Donald Trump sure is trying hard to fit into the Reform Party. Not to be outdone by Pat Buchanan in the populism department, Trump has now announced that, if elected president, he would enforce a one-time 14.25 percent tax on the nation's wealthiest people, thus wiping out the national debt. "This is something that would take place so easily, so wonderfully," declaimed Trump, who, as he's been quick to note, stands to lose between $200 and $700 million. Unfortunately, though, as soak-the-rich schemes go, Trump's isn't a very good one—perhaps because he lacks experience in such endeavors. For one thing, the incredibly rich are quite adept at avoiding crude lunges for their wallets—by moving their assets overseas until the one-time tax expires, for example. And, if Trump's tycoon targets actually were to pay, they would have to sell off loads of stock (sinking the Dow Jones) or borrow heavily from banks (raising interest rates). If Trump really wanted to tax the wealthy, he would simply close loopholes in the existing tax code. But don't hold your breath. The Donald's one abiding public policy conviction is his visceral disdain for the 1986 Tax Reform Act—which did precisely that.

CLASS BIAS: Last week, the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union, called for a ban on hiring teachers who lack full certification. All future teachers, they insisted, must be accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). "No waivers. No exceptions. No excuses," said NEA president Bob Chase. Quite reasonable, except that there is little evidence linking certification with teacher quality. Studies by Michael Podgursky of the University of Missouri and Dale Ballou of the University of Massachusetts have found no evidence that students taught by NCATE-certified teachers perform better than those taught by instructors without NCATE certification. But the NEA isn't really after higher student achievement; it's after higher teacher salaries, which it believes the certification requirement will bring. There's nothing wrong with higher salaries if they improve teacher quality. But the regulatory hurdle will likely do the opposite, making it harder to pull in teachers who have one of the only characteristics that predicts effectiveness: knowledge of a specific subject. Forcing teachers to attend NCATE certification programs that douse them with pedagogical blather (NCATE's "vision of quality" seeks to promote "equity" and "diversity" but says nothing about academic achievement) will likely scare off math and science specialists in droves. With a looming shortage of such teachers nationwide, getting them into the classroom should be the NEA's top priority. No waivers. No exceptions. No excuses.

WHDH TV

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

Boston TV reporter Andy Hiller interviewing George W. Bush, November 3, 1999

Hiller: Can you name the president of Chechnya?
(You're a phenomenally stupid man, aren't you?)

Bush: No, can you?
(Who can keep all those little African countries straight, anyway?)

Hiller: Can you name the president of Taiwan?
(Can I?)

Bush: Yeah, Lee.
(Aren't they all called that over there?)

Hiller: Can you name the general who is in charge of Pakistan?
(This is going to be big. I'm kissing local news goodbye.)

Bush: Wait, wait, is this 50 questions?
(I could raise three mil in that time.)

Hiller: No, it's four questions of four leaders in four hot spots.
(Howie Kurtz, here I come!)

Bush: The new Pakistani general, he's just been elected—not elected, this guy took over office....
(That would have been good enough at Yale.)

Hiller: Can you name him?
("Katie, it's a pleasure to be with you here on 'Today.'")

Bush: General. I can't name the general. General.
(Who'd have thought that cute Harvard chick was in the military?)

Hiller: And the new prime minister of India?
(Next stop: world leaders of the 1930s with Pat Buchanan.)

Bush: The new prime minister of India is [pause]. No. Can you name the foreign minister of Mexico?
(Those guys have cousins who actually vote. Note to self: Get Condi to ID for. min. of Israel before NY.)

CALLED TO ACCOUNT: This week, as Israeli and Palestinian negotiators sat down for final status talks, one matter was apparently off the table: the $8 million Yasir Arafat has been receiving each month since 1994 from taxes the Israeli government levies on Palestinian people and goods. As first reported in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, this money isn't going to the Palestinian Authority—it's going to a personal account at Bank Leumi, Tel Aviv, that Arafat controls. Israel agreed to the payments as part of the 1994 economic accords because, as Minister of the Interior Natan Sharansky puts it, "strengthening Arafat was very important." But Sharansky is now trying to cut the payments off, arguing that "the more transparencies in their society, the more reliable relations we can build with them." Unfortunately, many of the Washington groups supposedly devoted to democracy and good governance in the Middle East don't seem to agree. When asked to comment specifically on the payments, spokespersons for the Israel Policy Forum and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee all declined. Seems like it's not just the Middle East that needs a bit more transparency. ■

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Silicon Valley to Judge Jackson: Yawn.

Windows Dressing

By GARY RIVLIN

IN EARLY 1996, Microsoft issued the following warning to Compaq Computer: Feel free to continue preloading the Netscape Web browser—but, if you do, you will lose the right to sell Microsoft products on your machines. Compaq, then the world's leading supplier of personal computers, knuckled under with barely a fight, dropping Netscape altogether. It would grin and bear Microsoft's inferior browser, because without the right to bundle the Windows operating system on its machines, it was done for.

STEVE McCRACKEN

For antitrust attorney Gary Reback, that was the moment for the federal government to intervene. "Had the government appeared on the day with guns blazing and said, 'You're not terminating anybody,' then maybe they could've made a difference," says Reback, whose pestering on behalf of Netscape helped convince the Justice Department to file a broad antitrust action against Microsoft in May 1998. "But to have Netscape call 911 and have to wait two years for the police to show up—I mean, really." When it bludgeoned Compaq, Microsoft accounted for two percent of the browser market. Today, it represents 64 percent, in no small part because of such bullying and because of its propensity to offer anything, including cash and deep discounts on other Microsoft products, to any computer manufacturer or Internet service provider willing to dump Netscape in favor of Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Two weeks ago, Assistant U.S. Attorney General Joel Klein, head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, boasted in a speech in New York that the speedy pace of the Microsoft trial proves that both his division and the courts can "move in Internet time." In Silicon Valley, they heard Klein's boast and scoffed. It's been three and a half years since Microsoft began its all-out campaign to shut down Netscape's primary distribution channels, and more than one year since it attained its minimum goal: at least 50 percent of the browser market. What's more, Netscape was swallowed up last year by America Online; technically, it no longer exists. The Microsoft decision answers a question that Silicon Valley stopped asking years ago. By chance, I was interviewing Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Novell, when I learned that Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson was about to release his first set of findings on the Microsoft case. Prior to taking over at Novell, Schmidt was a top executive at Sun Microsystems, probably the valley's most rabidly anti-Microsoft corporation; Schmidt used to joke that his unofficial title was "chief Microsoft attack dog." Yet, when I told him the news, he seemed barely to notice. "I'll have to be sure to watch the news later," he said. Maybe I only imagined that I heard him yawn over the phone.

Yes, corks did pop on some very expensive bottles of champagne in Silicon Valley when the news of Jackson's broadside arrived last Friday. But, by the time the judge declared that Microsoft was a monopoly that used predatory practices to gain an unfair advantage over Netscape and other rivals, Microsoft's bullying tactics were no longer the burning issue they had been just a year or two earlier. A world once obsessed with the browser wars and Web surfing is now obsessed with Web portals and the transformation of the Internet into the world's largest shopping mall—a narrative in which Microsoft plays a subordinate role. The dot-com entrepreneurs whose tales of instant riches assault us at every turn spend their nights sweating Amazon.com (which *Fortune* recently dubbed "the octopus of the Internet") and Yahoo! By contrast, they look upon Microsoft with the same condescension with which Microsoft once looked down on IBM—as a bloated behemoth hopelessly overrun by innovation.

This isn't to say the antitrust *action* was unimportant. In fact, the action is part of what made the findings redundant. The action mattered because it has, for the past two years, forced Microsoft to play nice. In 1996, the Washington,

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D.C.-based Consumer Project of Technology phoned a dozen top computer manufacturers in search of one willing to sell a Windows-less PC. Not one would. Now even close Microsoft allies such as Dell Computer offer factory installation of rival operating systems. Years back, Microsoft was roundly criticized for configuring Windows 95 so that, when installed, it disabled a key setup file used by Internet access providers that rivaled the company's own online service, MSN. Last year, when Microsoft could have automatically registered every customer purchasing a copy of Windows 98 for Hotmail, the company's contender in the world of free e-mail, Gates and Co. chose discretion and passed on the idea.

This is not to say that Microsoft has become a pussycat. It has, in fact, purchased stakes in—if not swallowed whole—well over 100 companies during the past five years, and it has entered so many fields (a partial listing includes online malls, car sales, travel bookings, home sales, loans, games, and magazines, as well as cable TV news, speech-recognition technology, electronic postage, automobile-based PCs, and a scaled-down Windows for consumer electronics) that some trade magazines assign multiple reporters to the Microsoft beat. But the burden of the antitrust suit, combined with the threat posed by speedier start-ups, has more than kept the company from monopolizing the information technology market in the way trustbusters feared. In fact, it's barely holding its own. "We're a company that's looking over its shoulder and questioning how every action might look," one longtime Microsoft executive told me. "How can we keep up with these smaller, more nimble companies that are only thinking about being the next Microsoft?"

IF JACKSON'S FINDINGS have any influence at all, it will be on post-Microsoft mogul wannabes. These junior CEOs often sound like the Gates of old, before his p.r. handlers convinced him to stop talking about "killing," "crushing," or "destroying" the competition. But the ruling may not even do that. To set an example for others, the antitrust suit would have to inflict real pain on Microsoft, and, hoopla aside, it's not certain that it will. From the start, Jackson has made it clear that he believes the government and Microsoft should reach an out-of-court settlement, and whatever Microsoft agrees to will be much less onerous than the punishment meted out by a judge whose initial findings were so harsh that a Microsoft spokesman confessed that it wasn't until paragraph 408 that he could find something favorable to his point of view. The last time the government sued the Gates empire, it settled the case out of court with a consent decree that, long after it would do much good, essentially prevented Microsoft from taking the kinds of actions that had won it its Windows monopoly in the first place. And, even if this case isn't settled, there will be the usual appeals—which will likely delay any justice until some time around the year 2003. "At the Justice Department, they're always talking about being in this for the long haul," says Gary Reback. "But, in Silicon Valley, we don't understand 'long haul.' A lot of these companies would not be alive if they paid too much attention to the long haul." ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

Road Rage

By ISABEL KERSHNER

THE LONG-OVERDUE opening of a 43-kilometer "safe passage" route linking the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was expected to spark Palestinian jubilation. For the first time since the Gulf war in 1991, when Israel began clamping down on travel in and out of the two territories, Palestinians would be able to move freely between them. Divided Palestinian families would be reunited. Trade between the West Bank and Gaza would flourish. And, most importantly, a new Palestinian entity would emerge, a vital core around which a state could eventually be built.

But, when the great day finally arrived this October, there was little fanfare. The Palestinian Authority opened the route "almost reluctantly, as if they were forced to," says Shlomo Dror, spokesman for the Israeli military liaison office in the territories. For all their shared sense of Palestinian identity, there are deep and diverse tensions between the Palestinians of Gaza and those of the West Bank. It's not merely, as the press would have it, that the poorer Gazans are envious of their wealthier West Bank cousins, who in turn worry that the Gazans will flood their territory and depress their economy. Increasingly, it is the West Bank Palestinians who are jealous of the *Gazans*—for monopolizing both the offices and the key institutions of the new Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian populations of the West Bank and Gaza have different characters because their territories have different histories. After the establishment of Israel in 1948, Gaza fell under Egypt's rule, while the West Bank was ruled by Jordan. West Bank Palestinians were given Jordanian passports that allowed them to travel freely, which, in turn, gave the territory a cosmopolitan air. By contrast, Gaza had a much greater percentage of dispossessed refugees—mainly uneducated peasants and Bedouins from southern Israel and the Negev—and Egypt regarded it as an unwelcome appendage. The Palestinians of Gaza needed special permission even to enter Egypt. Today, at least 45 percent of the population still lives in refugee camps, while in the West Bank the figure is less than ten percent. Compared with the West Bank, the Gaza Strip became closed and conservative—a hotbed of radicalism and the birthplace of the intifada.

It also became very poor. In recent years, Israel has placed strict limits on the number of Palestinians it allows in to work. But, whereas tens of thousands of West Bank Palestinians could slip across the territory's long and porous border with Israel to continue working illegally in the Jewish state, Gaza was almost entirely sealed off. Thus the impact of the security closure has been far more severe there. At more

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than 17 percent, unemployment in Gaza is about eight percentage points higher than in the West Bank. The average daily wage in Gaza is $10, compared with more than $12 in the West Bank.

Not surprisingly, then, the traffic since the opening of the safe passage has mostly headed one way: of the 5,000 Palestinians who used the new route during the first week, 4,000 were traveling from Gaza to the West Bank. Most appeared to be young men looking for work. And already there are signs that the West Bank Palestinians are less than thrilled by the arrival of the Gazans. A recent argument between Hebronite and Gazan merchants selling jeans near an Israeli army checkpoint in the central West Bank apparently ended in blows.

In Ramallah, the trendy "capital" of the West Bank, "the West Bankers look down on the new refugees," says Adel Yahya, director of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange. "The West Bank has enough problems of its own. People feel the Gazans are coming to take something from them. They are complaining, and there's even a touch of racism involved." And, in the refugee camps around the city, where some Gazans have already rented cheap houses, locals grumble that the Gazans are driving up rents.

NONETHELESS, EXPERTS REMAIN optimistic that the economic disparity between the two territories will be short-lived. Theoretically, at least, says Salem Ajluni, a U.N. economist in Gaza, the ability of Gazans to seek work in the West Bank or in Israel should push up wages in the Gaza Strip. What's more, Gaza has prospects of its own, with plans for a commercial seaport on the Mediterranean as well as a future cargo terminal at Gaza International Airport, which so far handles only passengers. Ajluni says the seaport would allow Gazans to ship bulky commodities such as West Bank marble to European markets, while the airport could boost the export of perishable produce, including flowers and strawberries.

And the harmonization between the two territories may not be only economic. According to surveys by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies, located in the West Bank town of Nablus, Gazans have become less radical, less supportive of violence, and more supportive of the peace process than they were during the early days of self-rule. Correspondingly, says the center's director, Khalil Shikaki, the negative stereotypes of "rough, tough, and backward" Gazans that used to be prevalent in the West Bank have lessened in recent years.

In fact, the greatest challenge to uniting the two populations may stem not from discrimination against the Gazans but from discrimination by them. The reason is Yasir Arafat, who has firmly established Gaza as his power base and the center of Palestinian Authority activity. Privately, West Bank intellectuals and professionals rage over the fact that, while the Palestinian Authority maintains twin branches of its ministries in the West Bank, the real decision-makers are nearly all in Gaza. Notes one Palestinian insider: "Arafat is a Gazan. The late Abu Jihad [Khalil al-Wazir], the only real second-in-command Arafat ever had, was a Gazan. Almost every one of the 'gang' around Arafat is Gazan."

Disgruntled West Bankers also suspect that Gaza has received more than its fair share of foreign donor money, while some villages in the West Bank go without electricity or roads. "Deep in their hearts, in Lebanon, Syria, and Tunis, the Palestinian leadership thought they, the Gazans, were the ones who started the revolution, who started the intifada, and that they therefore deserve a bigger slice of the cake," says a prominent West Banker. "Arafat knows that we are the most educated, the most enlightened. We plan everything, and the results go to Gaza. We have become the underdogs. The Gazans are Arafat's Ashkenazim." ■

Campaign reform that might actually work.

Taking Offense

By JONATHAN COHN

DURING THE WEEK of October 12, as the Senate prepared for a final showdown on the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill, Ellen Miller directed her organization, Public Campaign, to do what every other good-government group in town was doing: pressuring members of Congress. But, while the other reform groups were feverishly trying to assemble the votes to overcome a Senate filibuster, Public Campaign was pursuing a different agenda: torpedoing a compromise bill that was taking shape.

The compromise would have replaced the McCain-Feingold bill's outright ban on soft money donations with a cap of $60,000 while *raising* the existing limits on other types of donations. In Miller's mind, it would have given wealthy interests even more influence: "deform" instead of "reform," as she likes to say. So Public Campaign's lobbyists began circulating newspaper advertisements that the group was threatening to run in the hometown papers of senators who voted for the compromise. "Instead of listening to us," the ad text read, "Senator XXXXXX just voted to triple the amount individuals can give to a candidate.... That's not campaign finance reform.... Senator XXXXXXXX: Out of Touch With His Constituents." The compromise never materialized, and on October 19 McCain-Feingold died for the second year in a row.

It wasn't the first time Public Campaign has played hardball, or, for that matter, the first time the group's putative comrades in the reform movement were left grumbling about the famously obstreperous Miller and her band of troublemakers. Public Campaign's whole premise is that, when it comes to money in politics, only an aggressive, strident, sweeping approach to reform can work. Piecemeal solutions, they argue, aren't only bad policy; they'll never pass. It's a strange argument, considering that in politics compromise is usually a synonym for realpolitik. And it may well be right.

Public Campaign dedicates itself exclusively to a reform it

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calls the "Clean Money" plan. Under this plan, the government offers candidates full public financing—that is, money from the taxpayers—for their campaigns. In return, candidates agree not to raise private money. The idea is to get at the campaign finance problem from the demand side. Instead of limiting the supply of money to candidates by regulating certain kinds of contributions or campaign spending—and then watching candidates figure out new ways around those barriers—Clean Money reduces the demand for money by simply giving it to candidates. It's far more comprehensive than anything Congress has contemplated in years.

Just about every pro-reform group supports some version of public financing. The question is how you get there. The strategy championed by campaign finance reform stalwarts like Common Cause has been to pursue incremental, supply-side reforms—on the theory that public financing is too difficult a sell with a public skeptical of big government. The premise of Public Campaign is exactly the opposite: that the only way to pass campaign finance reform is to bypass legislatures altogether (via the ballot initiative) or to bully lawmakers into submission. An inside game, they insist, can never work, because campaign finance reform is an unusual issue: it doesn't pit one Washington faction against another but the entire political establishment against those outside it. As a result, everything depends on grassroots pressure. If the compromises required to cobble together a congressional majority sap the reform issue of its public clarity, then legislators have no incentive to make any changes at all—which is exactly what happened with McCain-Feingold.

At the national level, Public Campaign has steadfastly refused to lower its expectations, focusing on pummeling opponents of reform. While past efforts at reform have generally treated legislators with kid gloves—lest swing votes be lost—Public Campaign has begun giving out a "Golden Leash Award" for members of Congress who are in the pockets of special interests. At the state level, meanwhile, Public Campaign works with local groups to pass actual laws. Key to this effort has been the group's emphasis on how special interest money skews politics on bread-and-butter issues, a strategy that makes the normally staid topic of government reform resonate with people concerned about particular issues. ("Want Guns Out of Our Schools?" asked one recent ad. "Get Gun Money Out of Our Politics.")

AND IT'S WORKING. Over the past four years, while Common Cause and other reform groups have continued their quixotic crusade for incremental reforms in Congress—each year proposing ever-more-minimalist measures, only to see them fail—"Clean Election" laws have passed in four states. And, while victory in the liberal New England havens of Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts was perhaps to be expected, Public Campaign also eked out a narrow win in notoriously libertarian Arizona. It turns out that ordinary voters, even in conservative states, are a much easier sell than Beltway politicians.

Of course, passing these initiatives is merely a first step. To be parlayed into success nationally, the state laws must work as demonstrations. Here the evidence, although hardly definitive, is encouraging. Anti-reform groups such as the Chamber of Commerce have filed several lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the measure. But, to date, not one suit has won (Clean Election's most recent victory came last week in Maine). Even the American Civil Liberties Union, whose absolutist reading of the First Amendment has long made it a thorn in the side of campaign finance reform efforts, recently signed on to Public Campaign's crusade.

More important, there's evidence that the Clean Election laws may actually be curbing fund-raising activity. In June, an *Arizona Republic* story, headlined "ALL'S QUIET ON LEGISLATIVE FUNDRAISING FRONT," chronicled a sudden drop in the number of fund-raisers being held for candidates running in the 2000 elections. Activity has since picked up, according to local operatives; but, in one of the first major tests of the law—the race for Arizona's Corporation Commission, a board with vast regulatory powers over the state's utilities and telecommunications industry—the four candidates for two open seats have indicated they will seek public funding under the Clean Money law.

None of this means the future of Clean Money is assured. Several court challenges remain, and there are still kinks in the laws that the states must work out. At some point, an extremist candidate will likely qualify for public funds. If the local equivalent of David Duke starts receiving taxpayer dollars to fund his campaign, voter attitudes might change quickly. And, at the national level, if the attacks on individual members of Congress don't either radically change its composition or shame moderates into backing comprehensive reform—a tall order—there will be no Clean Money laws coming out of Capitol Hill for a very long time. Public Campaign's is an all-or-nothing gambit, and on balance the odds still favor nothing. That sounds pretty unappealing, until you consider that nothing is pretty much what we have now. ■

Germany Dispatch

Middle of Nowhere

By JOHN B. JUDIS

BERLIN

GERMAN CHANCELLOR Gerhard Schroeder is probably the most unpopular leader in Europe. In recent months, voters have repudiated his Social Democratic Party in four major regional elections. In October, when celebrations were taking place to mark the transfer of Germany's capital from Bonn to Berlin, thousands of workers carried signs reading SCHROEDER GO HOME. If the Social Democrats lose twice more next spring, Schroeder's party members will likely replace him as chancellor.

Some of Schroeder's problems stem from his initial indecision. He was prepared to govern in a grand coalition with the

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Christian Democrats, not as part of a left-wing majority with the Greens. He first planned to increase taxes on corporations, then proposed cutting social spending—infuriating, in succession, business and labor. But now he has decided on a strategy—his version of the Clinton-Blair "Third Way." Schroeder has finally made up his mind, but he has settled on an ideology for which his country is thoroughly unsuited.

This summer, Schroeder signed a joint declaration with Tony Blair committing his government to a common Third Way strategy, which he called the "*neue Mitte*" (new center); this month, the German chancellor is off to a meeting in Florence with Blair, Bill Clinton, and other Third Way proponents. But the Third Way is the product of a peculiarly Anglo-American experience: the Reagan-Thatcher economic reforms of the 1980s. Had a decade of conservatism not transformed the domestic political and economic landscape, Clinton and Blair would never have been able to create a new centrism that seeks to reconcile market economics with liberal ideals. Germany has not had its bout with radical conservatism. As a result, it is singularly unprepared—politically, economically, or psychologically—for even the mild reforms that Schroeder now champions.

In many ways, Germany is a victim of its own postwar success. During the 1950s, its gross national product grew eight percent per year, and unemployment dropped from eleven to three percent. From 1963 to 1973, the unemployment rate averaged 0.9 percent, the lowest of any major country. During the '70s, Germany enjoyed the highest productivity of any nation in the world. By the early '90s, German workers were making higher wages, working fewer hours, and enjoying greater benefits than their European or American counterparts. Not only for German but for American and British intellectuals like Robert Reich and Will Hutton, Germany was a living answer to the question of whether a country could promote equality without sacrificing efficiency.

TODAY, HOWEVER, WITH unemployment at ten percent and popular discontent rising, that answer may be no. True, some of Germany's recent woes can be traced directly to unification, which raised the standard of living of citizens from the East but also left many of them unemployed as 14,000 inefficient firms were sold or liquidated. But unemployment had begun to rise even before unification—it averaged more than nine percent in West Germany between 1982 and 1987. And during the '90s it has remained at eight percent in the West while climbing to 13 percent in the East. More important, while the United States created about 13 million new jobs between 1991 and 1998, Germany actually *lost* 2.6 million. Germany also has a much lower percentage of employable citizens at work than the United States or other European countries do. Among men age 55 to 64, only 47 percent of Germans work, compared with 65 percent of Americans.

One explanation for German unemployment, popular on the German and American left, is that Germany is a victim of the Maastricht Treaty, which established the euro as Europe's common currency. That agreement forced Germany to follow a tight monetary policy that discouraged investment, and, since the launch of the euro last year, the new European Central Bank has kept monetary policy on a tight rein. Before he was sacked by Schroeder, leftist Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine repeatedly pressured the Central Bank to lower interest rates.

There is some truth to this argument. Lower interest rates would undoubtedly stimulate growth and employment. But monetary policy doesn't begin to explain why Germany has failed so dramatically to create jobs. From 1990 to 1995, interest rates were lower in Germany than in the United States, but, during the same period, the United States created about six million jobs and Germany lost almost one million. In reality, the impediments to German job growth are mostly structural, which means that unemployment cannot be substantially brought down by good old-fashioned Keynesian pump-priming. According to one estimate, Germany needs economic growth of 2.5 percent or more to create new jobs, while the United States needs growth of only 0.6 percent.

GERMANY'S REAL ECONOMIC problem can be summed up in one word: services. New technology has made German manufacturers more productive, and, as a result, they require fewer workers. That's true in the United States as well, where manufacturing employment has actually declined by 13,000 since 1970. But in the United States the decline in manufacturing employment has been counterbalanced by a net increase of 50 million service jobs. West Germany, by contrast, added only 5.6 million service jobs between 1970 and 1990, and unified Germany has created fewer than one million, while losing three million manufacturing jobs. Indeed, Germany currently has the lowest proportion of service workers—about 63 percent—of any European country.

Many new service jobs in the United States come from new firms. But in Germany it is notoriously hard to start a new business. There is very little venture capital, and banks are conservative in their lending practices. Firms that manage to get funds must still secure an array of permits, and fledgling entrepreneurs have to pay dues to guild-like local business associations and adhere to their rules. Electronic commerce is relatively primitive in Germany, with only seven percent of households online—the result, in part, of telephone pricing that bills local calls by the minute. There's no way anyone in Germany would have created Amazon.com.

In the United States, service-sector start-ups begin by paying low wages and hiring temporary or part-time workers. But German firms must pay the prevailing union wage in that sector or region—even if their workers don't belong to a union. Only 29 percent of German workers are unionized, but 92 percent are covered by union contracts. Firms are constrained by strict rules limiting part-time and temporary employees. And they must pay an additional 21 percent of wages to the government to finance generous social security benefits. Workers, for their part, lack incentives to take new jobs, because they can still receive 78 percent of their wages after five years of unemployment.

In addition, there are cultural barriers to a booming retail trade. Until three years ago, Germany limited shopping to

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daylight hours on weekdays and Saturday mornings. Now Germans can shop until four o'clock in the afternoon on Saturdays, but unions and churches have banded together to prohibit nighttime opening hours and Sunday shopping. More importantly, many Germans retain the derisive attitude toward the service sector ("hamburger jobs") that was cleansed from American and British politics during the Reagan-Thatcher years. It's not that Germany is hungering for service jobs and can't get them. It's that many in Germany view such jobs as incompatible with a just and equitable society.

That, however, represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the postindustrial service economy. While the share of "hamburger jobs" in the American economy has remained constant since 1970, the number of high-skilled and high-paid service workers has begun to rise. According to a new study by Anthony P. Carnevale and Stephen J. Rose of the Educational Testing Service, the percentage of low-skilled service workers has remained around 20 percent for the last 40 years, while the percentage of high-skilled service workers has grown in this decade. In addition, Carnevale and Rose show that well-paid office professionals—who now outnumber clerical workers—earn more than their manufacturing counterparts. These better-paid, highly skilled jobs build upon the lower-paid jobs: the Gap needs managers, buyers, and designers as well as salespeople.

The development of a service sector has also been key to the development of information technology. The Internet was devised by the U.S. military to allow scientists to share their research, but much of its development in the '90s, including the growth of the World Wide Web, has been driven by commercial services. Shopping.com, Amazon.com, and Egghead.com represent the extension of discount stores and mail-order firms onto the Internet. If the German economy tries to insulate itself from these commercial developments, it will consign itself to backwardness.

SCHROEDER SEEMS TO understand this. He has proposed tax cuts for business and reductions in social security cost-of-living adjustments—all in an effort to reduce the cost of labor and increase the incentive to invest—and he has set up a task force to look at Germany's service sector. But he has little support within his own party. Most Social Democrats want to preserve Germany's existing job base but to spread the jobs more widely among the population by reducing the workweek and by lowering the mandatory retirement age. In October, Germany's largest and most powerful labor union, IG Metall (the metalworkers' union), proposed shortening the workweek from 35 to 32 hours and lowering the social security retirement age from 65 to 60. Behind these proposals is a vision of Germany in which citizens spend a shrinking part of their lives at work and a greater part in discretionary noncapitalist activities. The means of production would remain in capitalist hands, but, other than that, it's not all that different from Marx's early vision of communism—"hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I like."

And it's about as realistic. Reducing the workweek without also decreasing wages, and lowering the retirement age without reducing benefits, would raise German labor costs even further. Employers would have even greater incentive to automate their factories or to move them to Eastern Europe or the United States. Unemployment would rise, and social tensions between the East and West would worsen.

Schroeder's rivals in the Christian Democrat and Christian Social Union parties don't really present an alternative, either. They claim to want to deregulate the German economy and cut welfare and unemployment benefits. Edmund Stoiber, the prime minister of Bavaria and head of the Christian Social Union, says, "We must ensure that only those who prove they are not able to work receive welfare checks.... We need genuine lower-income groups." But when I was recently in Berlin, on a trip sponsored by the Atlantic Bridge and the Robert Bosch Foundation, and asked Stoiber and Wolfgang Schauble, the Christian Democrats' parliamentary leader, whether they really wanted to follow 1980s Anglo-America, they backed off. Said Stoiber, "It may only sound as if I am advocating what Reagan or Thatcher did. It is not what I am in favor of. We actually have a much closer social network here than in the U.S. and Britain." In fact, it was partly because Christian Democratic Chancellor Helmut Kohl tried to cut social services during the mid-'90s that Schroeder and the Social Democrats took power. Germany's conservatives are not eager to walk the plank once again.

IN SOME RESPECTS, Germany's political situation resembles that of the United States in the late '70s. Schroeder is besieged by his party's left wing in the same way that Jimmy Carter was attacked by Senator Edward Kennedy and the labor left. But that's where the analogy breaks down. The Christian Democrats are not Reagan conservatives; at best, they're "New Democrats" or very moderate Republicans.

Germany cannot carry out the Third Way because Schroeder has taken over a country radically different from the ones Clinton and Blair inherited from their predecessors. The Clinton-Blair approach stresses knowledge and education as the key to postindustrial capitalism—the economics of Paul Romer rather than John Maynard Keynes. That's as relevant in Düsseldorf as it is in Denver. But the Anglo-American Third Way is also about the reassertion of liberal and social democratic values of equality and community after more than a decade of free-market extremism. Blair and Clinton recognize that years of deregulation, weak unions, and growing wage inequality helped unleash the market forces of the new economy. And they argue that it's possible to continue that growth while protecting the environment, guarding workers' rights, and reducing social inequality. Schroeder and Germany stand today at a different point in history. Germany still hasn't laid the groundwork for postindustrial growth. It hasn't undergone the wrenching social and cultural changes required to transform its economy. And neither the political elite nor the citizenry as a whole seems anywhere near desperate enough to carry them through. One day, Germany will find its feet in the information economy, but, between now and then, things will likely get worse. Germany isn't ready for a third way. It will be lucky if it finds a second one. ■

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The Gore campaign tries laugh therapy.

The Jester

By DANA MILBANK

MICHAEL FELDMAN, a senior adviser to Al Gore, was riding on Marine Two, the vice president's helicopter, when he reached into his briefcase and, much to his surprise, found a zucchini.

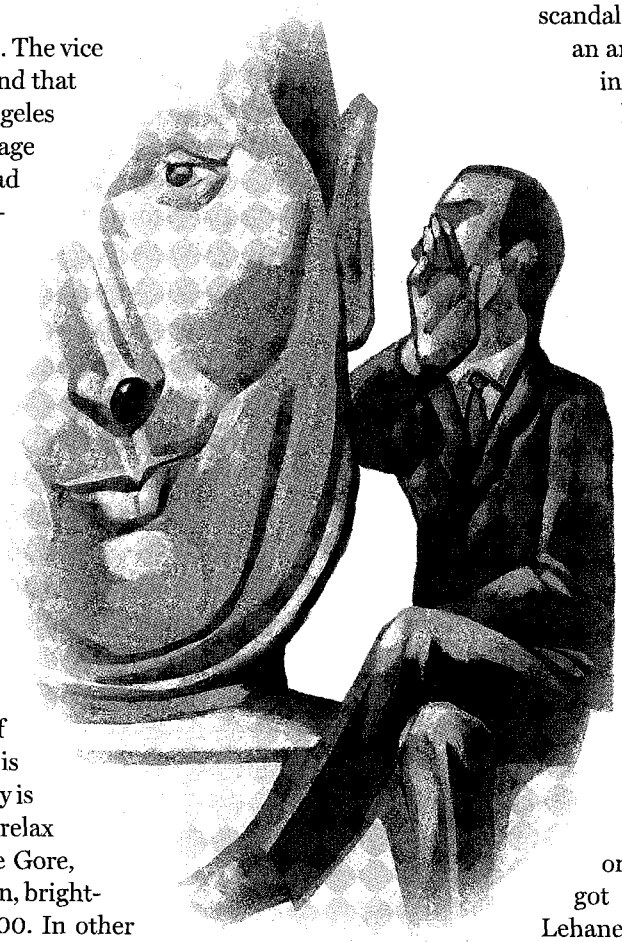
"What's *that*?" Gore asked, as Feldman pulled the vegetable from his bag.

Feldman knew instantly what had happened. "It's Lehane's zucchini, sir," the aide reported. Chris Lehane, who has just been named press secretary for Gore 2000, had surreptitiously placed the vegetable in Feldman's briefcase.

This is not as uncommon an event as one might expect. In fact, just about everybody who works for Gore has a complaint about Lehane. For example, Paul Cusack, Gore's personal aide, arrived at his Chicago hotel one night to discover that all the furniture had been removed from his room. Lehane, posing as Cusack, had called the hotel, demanding that his room be completely cleared out before he arrived.

Maurice Daniel has a beef, too. The vice president's political director found that he'd been hauling the Los Angeles Yellow Pages around in his luggage for two days, after Lehane had stashed it there. Spokesman Alejandro Cabrera is not amused, either. When Lehane was recently interviewed by Swedish television, he added a personal note about how much he loved Sweden, urging any and all Swedes to call him. Lehane said his name was Alejandro Cabrera and provided Cabrera's phone number.

Lehane, who was Gore's official mouthpiece and is now his campaign flack, has established himself as the court jester in an operation sorely in need of comic relief. Though his title is press secretary, his unofficial duty is far broader: he's helping Gore relax and lighten up—letting Gore be Gore, as he often puts it—which, in turn, brightens the dour mood in Gore 2000. In other words, he's giving Gore, or, more broadly, the Gore campaign, some heart. "Chris brings the lightening up that the Gore organization often needs," says Ron Klain, Gore's former chief of staff.



THOMAS FUCHS

Insurgent or fiercely ideological campaigns don't require this kind of injection of spirit. Steve Forbes and Gary Bauer inspire bands of young conservatives, while Bill Bradley attracts alienated liberals and John McCain brings out reformers. George W. Bush, like Bill Clinton in 1992, attracts partisans who want to save the party. But Gore draws none of these. Although often charming behind closed doors, in front of crowds he is alternately described as reserved or phony. So Lehane's job is to take the loose private Gore public. "I want Americans to see Gore the way I see Gore," he likes to say.

The Gore campaign staffers are constantly battling two negative images: that they don't have any fun and that they are a bunch of mercenaries with questionable loyalty. Lehane, a 32-year-old smart aleck with slicked-back hair who cut his teeth in the White House scandal-management operation, provides an antidote to both. "There's no passion inside the campaign," says one Gore loyalist, voicing a common complaint. "There aren't a lot of people willing to lay their body down on the tracks for him." But, while a number of Gore's advisers and consultants have divided loyalties and interests, Lehane is all Gore. "You want him in the foxhole next to you," says Mark Fabiani, who worked with Lehane in the White House counsel's office.

At the moment, Lehane is turning his Gore 2000 foxhole into a haven for merry pranksters. He persuaded Roger Simon of *U.S. News & World Report* to leave a gag phone message for the famously press-shy Feldman saying that he was working on a major Feldman profile; Feldman, on a bus tour with Gore when he got the message, went into a panic. Lehane's objects-in-luggage gags have now become routine: a burrito, numerous bananas,

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and a Jabba the Hutt paperweight in Feldman's briefcase, and a dog biscuit and salad tongs in Deputy Chief of Staff Monica Dixon's bag. The vice president, noticing Dixon's dog biscuit, felt compelled to inquire. But any hard feelings were eased by the leftover bottle of wine Lehane appropriated from a wedding reception in Providence, Rhode Island, and placed in Dixon's bag; an inscription said: "A toast to you from far and near, from Brenda and Todd." Lehane also annoys his colleagues with unflattering nicknames: a slight fellow becomes "Pipes" and the display on Gore aide Tom Rosshirt's cell phone morphs from ROSSHIRT to HAIRSHIRT.

Nor are the shenanigans strictly for internal consumption. For some time, Lehane has been engaged in a daily game of bingo with the press, trying to convince publications to print certain strange words—say, trying to get "aardvark" into the *Chicago Tribune*. For years, he's been hoping to get "officious intermeddler" into print (he finally landed it in an October 23 *New York Times* story on Bradley). But he has yet to achieve the Holy Grail of spokesman's bingo: getting a quote published with the word "rimbamboo" (supposed meaning: a fool) in it, which he claims is in the writings of *L.A. Confidential* author James Elroy.

ALONG THE WAY, Lehane's one-liners have made him a regular in various quote-of-the-day compilations. When asked after a Gore speech on guns whether Gore meant to criticize Bush, Lehane replied, "If the holster fits, wear it." Last week, after Bush flunked a reporter's foreign policy quiz, Lehane commented on Bush's recently leaked college grades: "I guess we know that C at Yale was a gentleman's C." Earlier, after a Bush foreign policy speech, he quipped: "The governor's foreign policy expertise begins with Slovenia and ends with Slovakia."

If there's a problem with Lehane, who has degrees from Amherst College and Harvard Law School, it's that he's too clever by half. His barbs sometimes sail over his targets' heads. When Republicans tried to kill Gore's earth-filming satellite, Lehane called them "troglodytes." James Sensenbrenner, chairman of the House Science Committee, responded that he didn't like being called a dinosaur. Lehane pointed out that troglodytes were early humans, not dinosaurs, telling reporters, "This is further proof of why they should be for the Clinton-Gore education plan."

Lehane's tomfoolery doesn't only loosen up Gore; it also soothes a hostile press corps. For instance, after reporters hounded Lehane with questions about Gore's Palm Pilot, Lehane, Feldman, and Gore loaded it with phony information and inside jokes; then Lehane persuaded Ceci Connolly, a *Washington Post* reporter, to ask Gore about the Palm Pilot in public. Gore happily revealed his programmed "to do" list: lunch with *Brill's Content* concerning Connolly, ask the FBI to investigate Connolly's pilfering of Gore campaign literature, and "remind Lehane of who he works for." Back in private, Lehane, Gore, and Feldman exchanged high fives and later retold the story for a Gore staffer like giddy schoolboys.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Lehane is that he still has a job at all. Gore's press shop is haunted by the ghosts of spokespersons past: Larry Haas, Pat Ewing, Marla Romash, Kiki Moore, Roger Salazar. The press operation is but a microcosm of the overall campaign, in which a number of Gore's top advisers—Bob Squier, Mark Penn, Klain, and Craig Smith—have been replaced. Though the campaign still has its share of highly paid consultants who also work with other clients, a small band of fierce loyalists has risen to prominence. Michael Whouley, the chief strategist, and Donna Brazile, the campaign manager, are, like Lehane, Gore fanatics, as are Dixon and Feldman on Gore's official staff. Kathleen Begala, Paul's sister, just hired as Gore's campaign communications director, is from the same mold: a lower-profile adviser with no professional interest other than Gore's. "Anyone with Begala chromosomes is going to be a . . . solid soldier for the cause," says Bush's ad man, Mark McKinnon, who knew Begala at the University of Texas.

Lehane's loyalty to Gore isn't the wide-eyed hero worship or cult-of-personality kind that other candidates inspire. "You can't imagine a more cynical guy," says a friend of Lehane's, and yet "he's unflaggingly loyal." The loyalty comes from Gore's highbrow appeal: he's serious, demanding, contemplative, and futuristic. But these same characteristics make him a lousy candidate, and, as a result, only those closest to Gore feel intense loyalty. "We see a part of him that not everyone gets to see," says Dixon. Watching Gore cope with 20-hour days and relentless adversity, she says, "bonds you to him. You'd kill for him."

In his intensity, Lehane is very much like Gore. He talks to reporters hundreds of times a day on his cell phone, and, when his battery dies, he switches it with the charged battery of an unsuspecting colleague or simply takes the colleague's phone. His fierce devotion to work has caused his girlfriend to implement what she calls the "weekend rule," which prohibits the returning of pages while out to dinner on weekends. On a trip to the Caribbean last Christmas, Lehane received a page and, because his cell phone didn't work, knocked on a villager's door and begged to use a phone. Even while jogging, he returns pages from pay phones.

A NATIVE OF blue-collar Lawrence, Massachusetts, with Irish and Italian roots, Lehane moved to Maine as a child and, despite his five-foot-eight stature, became captain of Kennebunk High's basketball team. In law school, he spent much of his time working on campaigns; a classmate recalls that Lehane once tore the plastic wrapper off his textbook for the first time as he began an exam. He wound up in Washington, doing tax policy in the bowels of the Treasury until Fabiani put him to work as a scandal manager. There, he drafted a report about the "communication stream of conspiracy commerce," or how Internet rumors reach the mainstream media. The report, ridiculed as sophomoric at the time, seems more relevant since the rise of Matt Drudge and the fall of Monica Lewinsky. After a stop at Andrew Cuomo's HUD, Lehane joined a Gore operation still submerged in the no-controlling-legal-authority era.

Today, Lehane is almost universally liked by reporters, particularly for his Mike McCurry-like sense of how to feed journalists. He knows which tidbit will fit in *The Wall Street Journal*'s "Washington Wire" or *The Washington Post*'s "In

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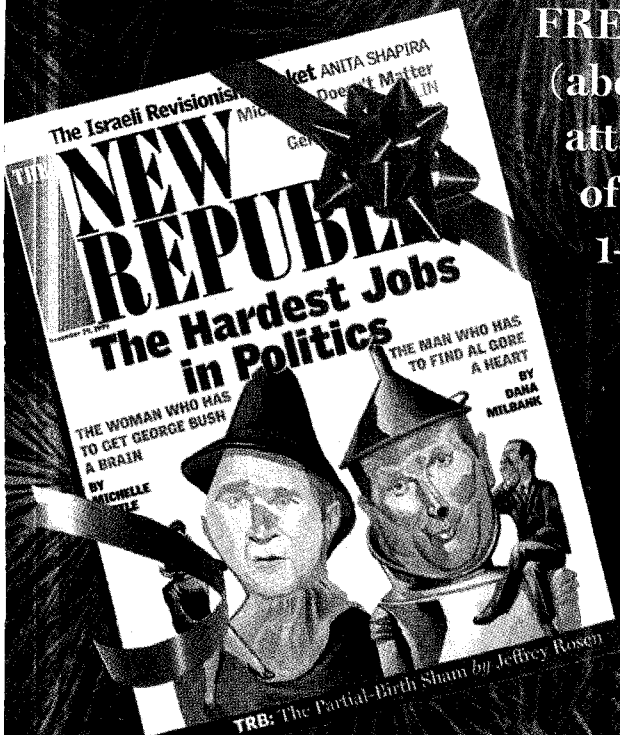
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the Loop." "He's the ultimate matchmaker," says Laura Quinn, the vice president's White House communications director. Once Lehane makes a match, he tracks down the reporter; he found Mike Glover, the Associated Press's man in Iowa, working out at a gym on a Saturday. Invariably, Lehane identifies himself to reporters by his code name: Frank Serpico, from the Al Pacino movie.

Though it hasn't yet produced much measurable benefit, Lehane has built up considerable goodwill by entertaining the press and dealing openly with reporters who are hard on Gore. When a particularly tough story about Gore appears, Lehane tends to brush it off with a Bill-the-Cat "Ack!" sound. "He takes the long view," says a colleague. "You can lose a battle but win the war." When I wrote a critical story about the vice president, "Serpico" appeared on my voice mail: "Good God, man. Accusations are being leveled. Fingers are being pointed. Who lost Milbank?" The light touch works. In Texas with Gore, Lehane met a group of Spanish-language reporters who wanted sound bites. Lehane speaks not a word of the language, so he called a member of his staff to ask for a phrase and then left his cell phone on so the staffer could hear the reporters howl with laughter as Lehane repeated the same phrase, with a terrible accent, in answer to every question.

Even if Lehane's antics don't yield favorable coverage, they have lifted morale. One Gore aide, in retaliation for a Lehane gag, set Lehane's hotel alarm for 3 a.m. on a recent trip and then ordered additional wake-up calls at 4 a.m., 5 a.m., and 6 a.m. Lehane's wardrobe (he bought a closetful of Armanis and Zegnas after he joined Gore's press staff) has also become a subject of mirth. When one Iowa farmer saw his threads, he remarked, "You're not from here, are you, son?" Lehane responded, "No, I'm from Ottumwa"—a nearby town. The incident wound up in *The Des Moines Register*, and Feldman, using Lehane's computer, sent an e-mail in Lehane's name to Gore staffers with the story and a note saying, "I am as well known as I am well dressed."

Lehane's retaliation was swift and severe: he sent a barrage of hoax e-mails from Feldman's computer. His cyberterrorism has become so regular that Feldman and Dixon have changed their screen savers so that they require passwords and read, "Don't even think about it, Lehane." Lehane, of course, declines to comment, saying, "I'd have to be a rim-bamboo to talk to you." ■

The woman behind George W.'s iron bubble.

The Enforcer

By MICHELLE COTTLE

THE HIGH PROPHET is kneeling on the carpet. Karen Hughes, communications director for Texas Governor George W. Bush, is hunkered down in the library of the Bancroft Academy in Wilmington, Delaware, a few feet from where her boss is participating in a roundtable with local educators. Two minutes earlier, Hughes had been working the room, meeting and greeting the media, her bulky, five-foot-ten-inch frame overshadowing most of the men in the place. But, as Bush settled in to take questions from the assembled teachers and PTA moms, Hughes made her way to the front of the media pack and crouched low, placing herself squarely in the seated governor's line of sight. As he talks, she scribbles on the back of a business card—snippets of his responses, for possible use in later press releases and speeches. In her gray cardigan, brown pants, and black shoes, a worn Southwestern-print handbag at her feet, Hughes looks a bit like a PTA mom herself. But her gaze is too intense. She chews constantly on her fingernails. As the governor takes the final question, Hughes is up again, patrolling the area. But, when Bush sits down for a too-cute interview with one of the school's sixth-graders, Hughes promptly resumes the position: front of the pack, low, on eye level with the candidate.

Bush, who delights in assigning nicknames, has dubbed Hughes "the High Prophet." She claims the moniker is simply a play on her maiden name, Parfitt. But there's more to it than that. Hughes is responsible for maintaining the central fiction underlying candidate Bush's astonishing success: that the governor's presidential campaign is laid-back. While Al Gore is mocked for his stick-like persona (and his strained attempts to overcome it), George W. has charmed voters and the media with his easygoing, "what, me care?" style. The governor doesn't need Naomi Wolf to tell him who to be. The campaign is loose, confident, and unstaged—an authentic representation of the man.

That, at least, is the perception. The reality is that Bush 2000 is one of the most tightly managed campaigns in political memory, thanks in large part to the fiercely protective Hughes. There is little leaking of inside info, Bush hews rigidly to a handful of stock speeches, and great care is taken to keep him from spontaneously interacting with the press and other candidates. Instead of debates, probing interviews, and lengthy Q&As, Team Bush schedules quickie news conferences (six or seven questions a pop), numerous speeches on warm and fuzzy broad themes, and periodic opportunities for journalists to talk policy details with campaign advisers. It's not that the governor is inaccessible; access is simply strictly controlled.

To some degree, this is typical front-runner caution. Don't

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bleed until you have to, as one senior Bushie explained to the press. But, in Bush's case, the aim is somewhat more involved. Whatever his overarching philosophy of government, George W. lacks much of the basic knowledge and experience expected in a presidential contender—especially a front-runner. By carefully controlling the circumstances under which Bush meets the press and public, Hughes allows her candidate to peddle his backslapping bonhomie without getting roped into discussing the specifics of why he wants to be president and how he plans to do the job. She has created for Bush a bubble so seamlessly artificial that it looks real.

But for how long? After months of adulation, the press's mood has recently begun to shift. *The New York Times* noted that the candidate's oft-repeated basic messages are growing tiresome. Pockets of the media—along with Bush's political opponents—are grumbling about the campaign's arrogance in picking and choosing how it engages them. "There's a reservoir of ill will building up," says one Washington journalist. "And their strategy looks like it's about to turn around and bite them on the ass." Recently, a Boston TV reporter surprised Bush during an interview with a couple of name-that-leader foreign affairs questions. Expect more such episodes as the media and the political competition push Bush to move beyond generalities and bromides. When that happens, the governor may come to regret the protective bubble that Hughes has provided. By not allowing Bush to sharpen his skills and make his mistakes early on, when few voters were paying attention, her success in shielding her candidate from the ugliness of the political fray may ultimately backfire. And Team Bush may come to find that Karen Hughes has done her job just a little too well.

THOMAS FUCHS

Ask two dozen people their thoughts on the High Prophet, and 23 will come back with variations of the same mantra: Karen Hughes is professional, disciplined, tough, straightforward, and loyal. (From Texans, expect to hear the phrase "straight shooter.") After a while, you get that creepy *Manchurian Candidate* feeling, as though people have undergone some systematic mental programming where Hughes is concerned.

You also hear a lot about what an imposing figure Hughes presents—perhaps not surprising when you're talking about a woman who wears a size twelve shoe. She has a Texas-size voice—a booming foghorn that can easily slice through the nattering of a room of journalists and frequently does, when Hughes decides to cut short a "press availability" that's getting out of hand. Moreover, Hughes is well-known for her willingness to get in your face and tell you what's what—particularly if she thinks you're being too tough on her boss. "I don't know how many times I'll say something and she'll come right at me hard and strong and loud," says Wayne Slater of *The Dallas Morning News*. You absolutely cannot bully Hughes, says CNN's Charles Zewe: "She is someone not diminutive in any sense of the word." Candidate Bush can afford to be chummy with reporters because he knows Hughes is not afraid to play the heavy.

Hughes's aura helps her control a media beast constantly pushing for access to her boss. "She treats the media like a covey of quail that can be rounded up," says Zewe. In *First Son*, one of the recent biographies of George W., Texas journalist Bill Minutaglio paints a telling picture of Hughes in action. Election Day, 1998: A media mob has staked out the governor's mansion, hoping to talk with Bush as he walks down to vote. Hughes has other plans. "She's herding the sheep, trying to trap them in old Sam Houston's barnyard. 'No, no!' she booms. 'Only pool reporters are allowed out of the gate!' Hughes, whose father trained at West Point, spreads her arms out. She is wielding a legal pad as the governor of Texas pauses to watch. He's grinning, his eyes look like blue Sweet Tarts ... reporters trapped inside the gates of the Mansion." As Bush ambles down the street, Hughes holds the beast at bay: "[She] is still frantically waving her arms as she blocks anyone from leaving. She has a long reach. She has slightly angled the top half of her body over, a good offensive lineman's trick, giving her more power and stability. No one can edge around the High Prophet.... She takes one last hard look at the press pool. She freezes the pool with a glare, spins, and wobbles into the street."

Hughes also refuses to play the usual flack-journalist game of leaking information. "She's surgically attached to message," says Jay Root, Austin bureau chief of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. "You cannot knock her off-message. There are some people you run into and they sort of let their hair down and go, 'I know, that was me the spokeswoman, but this is just me and you having a beer and we know all this is bullshit.' I don't think she thinks this is bullshit," says Root. "I think she's a true believer."

"Early in the campaign I got the sense that if you burst into Karen's room in the middle of the night, woke her up, and

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asked her questions about Bush, she would immediately give you the campaign line, because it was real to her," agrees Tucker Carlson, who wrote a controversial profile of George W. for *Talk* magazine (controversial in part because Hughes went around denying that the governor had used the word "fuck" when talking with Carlson). Hughes, in turn, sets the tone for the rest of the team. "The Bush operation is not perceived as being very fast and loose with information," says Root. "You can tell a lot of times when talking to them that they're reading from notes that probably Karen prepared."

"I don't get the sense that the subordinate press secretaries are very free to say things until they've been cleared with Karen," says R.G. Ratcliffe, of the *Houston Chronicle*. "The system over there seems to be that everyone takes the message about your questions, then they get back to you in the late afternoon. I'm assuming they gather the questions, run them all past Karen, get an answer, then come back and give you blah blah blah."

Staffers who don't abide by the rules get spanked—hard. One of the main reasons communications deputy David Beckwith, a veteran of handling Washington's temperamental press corps, was "let go" from the campaign this summer was his openness with the media. (Hughes says Beckwith had a different "tone" than the governor wanted. Others say Beckwith lost an ugly power struggle with Hughes.) Recently, in an effort to smooth the media feathers ruffled by Beckwith's untimely departure, the campaign enlisted Ari Fleischer, Elizabeth Dole's former flack, to serve as Hughes's deputy. Like Beckwith, Fleischer is a pro at tending to the Washington press corps—but is unlikely to repeat Beckwith's mistake of forgetting who's top dog in the message department. Even Karl Rove, Bush's chief political strategist, is rumored to have felt Hughes's wrath (though Hughes denies any past squabbling). As Wayne Slater tells it, after the governor's speech at the Midwest Republican Leadership Conference in Indianapolis in 1997, reporters began gathering around Rove for comment. "Karen was visibly upset with the fact that Rove was the person dealing on communications issues," Slater says. Afterward, the two senior staffers had a territorial clash, prompting the governor to talk to both about their areas of responsibility. "Karl was admonished," chuckles Slater. Hughes, and rigid control, won out.

THOUGH SHE'S NOT a native Texan, the High Prophet's Lone Star roots run deep. Hughes was born in Paris (France, not Texas), the first child of a full-time mom and a career military dad, Major General H.R. Parfitt, who later served as the last governor of the Panama Canal Zone. A couple of Army brats, Karen and her younger sister, Beverly, moved from place to place until 1969, when their father was stationed in Dallas. More than ready for a bit of stability, Karen stayed in Dallas through high school (her parents moved again right before her senior year) and college. She studied English and journalism at Southern Methodist University—from which she graduated summa cum laude—then went to work at a local TV station.

Hughes says that, although her family was always interested (but never active) in politics, it wasn't until she started reporting on the political scene that she caught the bug. In 1980, she was assigned to cover the elder Bush's first run for the White House, which gave her a glimpse of life on the presidential trail. Four years later (shortly after she wed attorney Jerry Hughes), a friend asked Karen if she would be interested in working for the Reagan-Bush campaign. Soon thereafter, Hughes signed on as the campaign's Texas press coordinator and later did presswork for a string of local races.

In 1991, Texas GOP chairman Fred Meyer recruited Hughes to be the state party's executive director. Hughes was responsible not only for making the trains run on time but also for getting the party's message to the public. Back then, the GOP boasted only two statewide officeholders. Meyer believed that the party's fortunes depended upon electing a Republican governor, and Hughes devoted herself to making that happen. Two years out from the 1994 election, she set up a rapid-response system for smacking Governor Ann Richards that even Democrats now admit was brutally effective. According to Ed Martin, then executive director of the state Democratic party, Hughes's unrelenting assault on Richards "earned Karen her spurs from the Republican leadership."

Hughes's efforts also impressed gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush. In 1994, Meyer, under pressure from more conservative elements of the party, chose not to run for reelection as state chairman. Hughes followed him out the door and joined up with the Bush campaign. Five years later, say campaign insiders, Hughes has emerged as George W.'s alter ego.

IT'S WIDELY RECOGNIZED that Bush trusts Hughes implicitly and seeks her advice on anything involving message or political positioning. "My sense of Karen is that she is one of the few people who is able to interrupt, contradict, and in other ways speak as an adult and a peer to Bush," says Carlson. In the message department, Hughes's primacy is absolute. For instance, although several members of Team Bush—including Rove—felt the governor should come out early with multiple policy prescriptions, Hughes favored focusing on two or three broad themes. The governor apparently agreed with her.

Hughes's role, however, goes beyond that of a trusted adviser. "She can be a bit of a mother hen, and you can tell he wants her to do that. He kind of relies on her to do that," says David Yepsen, a veteran political reporter with *The Des Moines Register*. "I've never seen her argue with him, but she'll prompt, she'll flesh out—things like that." (At the risk of waxing Freudian, you can't help but notice the similarities, in both physique and character, between Hughes and George W.'s mama, Barbara.) At press conferences, notes Wayne Slater, "when somebody asks something or says something and Bush isn't responding well enough, she'll be off to the side; Bush will instinctively stop—this has gone on for years—and all heads will turn to her as she explains something real loud. It happens so often that he instinctively falls back and lets her do it."

Indeed, it's Hughes's message discipline that gives Bush

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the freedom to be the friendly good old boy that voters (and the media) embrace. "Bush is a chatty guy who loves an audience," says Carlson. "He's very good at bullshitting with the guys. That's very appealing." But it can also be dangerous, and Bush counts on Hughes to keep him on track. Jay Root recalls one interview in which Bush was being slightly more talkative than usual. "He said a couple of things that might have gone farther than she might have said," says Root. Hughes didn't stop the governor, but at one point she commented, "My, isn't he being expansive today."

Other times Hughes simply shuts down the conversation. Just after the governor's reelection in 1998, Slater pressed Bush about whether he had ever been arrested. "He said, 'After 1968? No.' I said, 'What about before 1968?' He said, 'Well ...' and at that moment Karen stepped in and said, 'Wait a minute, I've not heard this.' She clearly wasn't prepared for whatever it was he was about to say, and he shut up." Slater argued that it was better for the governor to deal with any revelations sooner rather than later, and Bush agreed to get back to him on the matter. "To this day I have no idea what he was going to say," says Slater. "After she got to him, he shut up."

DEMOCRATS CLEARLY ENVY Hughes's success is controlling the candidate and his message. "Karen is a great marketing director," says Mike Hailey, spokesman for the Texas Democratic Party, who worked informally with Hughes when he was communications director for recently deceased Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock. "'George W. Bush, Republican front-runner' is pretty much a marketing creation. Without Karen's packaging, he's just another Republican with a big name and family connections and a record that's lackluster at best."

"Bush is the boy in the bubble of infotainment," snipes an Austin-based Democratic consultant. "They have swaddled him in cotton-candy, fluffy pieces: Mom, Dad, compassionate conservatism, and all the rest. Most of that is to conceal the fact that there's just not a lot of substance to George W. Bush."

But Democrats are no longer the only ones questioning whether George W. has much there there. Conservative critics from Marilyn Quayle to George Will have taken swipes at Bush's intelligence, and, following Boston reporter Andy Hiller's televised pop quiz last week, the media smell blood. Granted, the public may not take kindly to snotty reporters who zing the amiable George W. with esoteric questions that few voters could answer themselves. (Hughes cleverly notes, "The person who is running for president is seeking to be the leader of the free world, not a "Jeopardy!" contestant.") But, spin aside, Bush's handling of the Hiller confrontation was mediocre. He didn't head the questions off, he grew visibly peeved, and (most obviously) he didn't know the answers. All this despite the fact that the campaign must have known that a Hiller-style ambush would occur sooner or later. The governor's grace period, it appears, is ending, and the smooth ride Hughes has provided Bush till now may have left him ill-prepared for what is to come.

"Somewhere along the line the campaign will stumble, and, until they do, we won't know if they're ready," says the *Houston Chronicle*'s Ratcliffe. The worst hit the candidate has taken so far occurred when Sam Attlesey of *The Dallas Morning News* asked Bush at a campaign stop in New Orleans whether he could pass the drug-use litmus test given to many federal job applicants. The governor's stutter step on this question is considered one of the campaign's few bobbles. (Hughes, notably, was not along on that trip, having gone home to write a biography of Bush that's due out this month. Reporters, including Attlesey, speculate that, had Hughes been present, she would never have allowed the question to be asked.)

With John McCain nipping at Bush's heels in New Hampshire, pundits are clamoring for the governor to mix it up. Hughes says Bush will participate in four debates and a number of TV sit-downs in December and January. But Hughes's instinct for cocooning her man runs deep. In each of his gubernatorial campaigns, George W. consented to only one debate. During last year's race, Bush (i.e., Hughes) insisted on strictly controlled conditions: the debate was held in El Paso (difficult to get to) on a Friday night during high school football season (practically a religion in Texas), and no network correspondents were allowed into the hall. Bush's presidential debates won't be so hermetically sealed, but the press and public shouldn't expect much spontaneity. Bush will likely push the same basic themes of which the national press corps is so weary. "The reasons the governor's running for president don't change from day to day," says Hughes. "He's going to use that same speech until he's elected, and he should, because that speech speaks to the fundamental reasons he's seeking the presidency. That's what people want to hear. When he goes to a little chamber of commerce in New Hampshire, that's what they want to hear."

IT'S NOT HARD to see why Hughes would stick with a strategy that has brought her man from relative obscurity to the brink of the presidential nomination in one blazingly successful year. But it's a strategy that presumes a level of control over interactions with the press and the public that no previous candidate has been able to maintain. All of which raises a question that hovers over the Bush campaign: What happens if the bubble bursts? Does anybody, even the High Prophet, really know how Bush will fare? And has Hughes made a terrible mistake by not using these early months to find out?

At the brief "press availability" following Bush's tour of Bancroft Academy, Hughes stands silently, chewing her nails and fidgeting like an anxious parent at her son's first piano recital. At this particular event, the questioning never gets heated and Hughes—standing off to the governor's right, in his direct line of vision—never bothers to enter the fray. It's another easy, sweet, shallow stop on the Bush juggernaut. They won't all be like this. In fact, they probably won't be like this for much longer. But for Karen Hughes—who is staring intently at her candidate, periodically mouthing his answers, word for word, a half-beat before he speaks them—that is a matter for another day. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Two Teenage Girls

THE DARDENNE BROTHERS, Luc and Jean-Pierre, are the Belgian filmmakers who, in 1996, gave us *La Promesse*, a fine and unforgettable work. It burrowed into a chunk of rough proletarian life in Liège today, an environment in which the struggle to survive leads, ravenously, to the exploitation of workers by workers. Into this pit of vipers came an African family that showed a teenage Belgian boy—simply through their pride—that another kind of existence is possible, even in the muck. Now in **Rosetta** (October) the Dardennes bring us another teenager, this time a girl, in another grim Belgian environment.

La Promesse began in cool slyness, as the boy stole the pension money of an elderly woman. *Rosetta* explodes on to the screen with anger, Rosetta's anger as she storms down the hall of an office building. She has just been fired from a job in that building, and she assails the boss because of his injustice. No use: she has to leave. And she takes her anger with her.

Anger is the *ostinato* of the film. Even when Rosetta is quieter, she is angry. She lives in a trailer camp with her mother who, most of the time, is either drunk or sleeping with some man or both; and Rosetta has to fend for her mother and herself. She doesn't complain about the conditions of her life: she accepts them, even the hopelessness of her mother. But she is not supine; she is fierce. Her life has turned her into a jackal, nipping at chances to exist. When she gets a job, which she does by reporting the thievery of a boy in that job, she fills it well enough; but the wounds and scars of her struggle, her simmering fierceness, make it unlikely that she will ever settle into conventional order. As we see.

The Dardennes, who write their own screenplays, heat their picture with Rosetta's fury. I can't remember another film that was shot so predominantly with a hand-held camera. It's as if the girl's anger affected the very way in which her story is told. And the performance of Emilie Dequenne is so thoroughly immersed in this anger that, naively, we have to wonder what Dequenne herself was like between takes. Of course, this could be a question about any actor plunged into an extreme role, but Dequenne is so young and her performance is so relentless, so free of the self-regard that can tinge even good actors, that the question slips in.

No chance is skipped to articulate the squalor of Rosetta's life. (When she is out of money for food, she fishes in a pond near the trailer camp; when people fall into the pond, we learn how muddy it is, thus what the fish must be like.) The ceaseless fight for survival is in fact the firmest note in the picture. Since Rosetta never stops hating and fighting, no matter what happens, her struggle becomes a harsh tribute to inner strength.

But this relatively unvaried tone takes its toll on the film. In *La Promesse* the spiritual degradation was much the same, even though the boy and his father were comparatively prosperous, but the film moved to some wisp of hope for the boy. Rosetta is trapped, trapped throughout. A closing dash of Technicolor uplift would have been an atrocity. (The change in *La Promesse* was organic, true.) But the lack of even a catastrophe at the end of *Rosetta*, let alone uplift, turns the film into a dossier, the chronicle of a case. Once again the Dardennes are, quite obviously, greatly moved by the people with whom they deal, and they present the girl with insistent candor. But this time they have treated their subject as if they were making a documentary; and since it is fiction, their film leaves us with a sense of incompleteness, which *La Promesse* certainly did not. One wry truth about art is that it needs a little arrangement in order to seem unarranged.

The life of Joan of Arc is a snare for playwrights and film-makers. Dozens have been drawn to it, understandably enough, but to my knowledge, only one playwright (Shaw) and only one film-maker (Dreyer) have been able to treat it adequately. (I'm not considering the Verdi and Tchaikovsky operas, both of whose librettos derive from Schiller's play about the maid, or even Paul Claudel's poem for Arthur Honegger's dramatic oratorio. Music complicates the matter.) "Adequate" is hardly adequate for Shaw and Dreyer; both created great art. It would seem that, if you can treat Joan adequately, a masterwork is inevitable.

A playwright has one great advantage over a filmmaker: the theater is not tied to one actress. I have seen five women play Shaw's Joan, none of whom was good enough, yet the play survives, exalting us in print as it waits for still more women to attempt it. The filmmaker has to choose the right actress the first and only chance he will get. In ironical fact, Falconetti was better as Dreyer's Joan than any of those whom I have seen attempt Shaw's Joan: but then the Joans created by these two men are quite different. Shaw's is more fully chronicled, while Dreyer concentrates on the martyrdom. (He called his film, exactly, *The Passion of Joan Arc.*)

The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc (Columbia) essays the Shaw approach, the full story, but with the filmmaker's obligation: to cast the role properly the first and only chance he would get. The director, Luc Besson, best known for *La Femme Nikita*, has flunked this test drastically. Thus, no matter what other virtues the film has—and it has a few—it is doomed very early. Milla Jovovich, who plays Joan, is a young woman who has been unmemorable in several pictures. We are also told that, as a model, she has been on more than fifteen magazine covers. That is the sum of her previous career.

Sometimes I am forced to wonder about the very sanity of film people. Here, to put it just in production terms, is a major enterprise that involved a huge amount of money. Here, in larger terms, is a role in which an actress must convince us that, at seventeen, her Joan could persuade the Dauphin to give her command of his army, who could lead those soldiers to victory over the English, who was so triumphant that the English conspired to buy her from her Burgundian captors, and who, through all her actions, was burning with the religious conviction that carried her to the stake. (And eventually to sainthood.) And for this role Besson chose someone whose major distinction was fifteen magazine covers.

Jovovich is pretty enough—anyway, there is no need for Joan to be beautiful—but it is an undistinguished face. Her voice is thin, her emotional power thin, her ability to convince us of spiritual fire very much thinner. Her exhortations about her mission from God make us look around for the high school auditorium and the rest of the senior-class production in which she is starring. Jean Seberg, who

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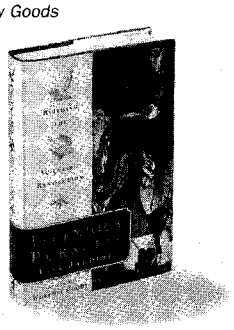

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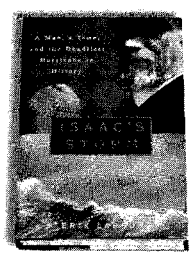

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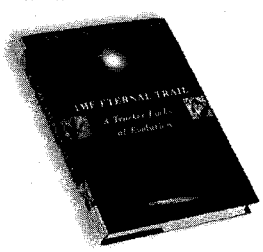

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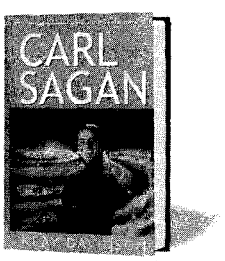

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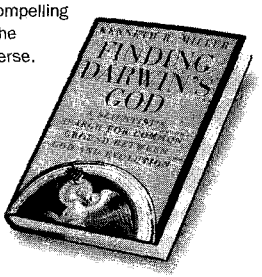

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had some small-scale talent, was painfully out of place in Preminger's film of Shaw's play, but Jovovich makes Seberg look sterling.

Besson wrote this serpentine screenplay with Andrew Birkin, and the influence of Shaw is not always hidden. (After his coronation, for instance, the new king says of Joan: "If only she would go home." At the end of the cognate scene in Shaw, the king says: "If only she would keep quiet, or go home.") At least Besson has cast some of the supporting roles decently. John Malkovich as the Dauphin, Faye Dunaway as his mother-in-law, Tcheky Karyo as Dunois, the commander who befriends Joan, and Timothy West as the bishop who presides at Joan's trial—all of them belong in a better picture. Dustin Hoffman plays the embodiment of Joan's conscience, who has conversations with her in her cell during the trial. Hoffman, always intelligent, manages to keep the role—or non-role—this side of the risible. ■

The failure of Israel's "new historians" to explain war and peace.

The Past Is Not a Foreign Country

By ANITA SHAPIRA

I.

IN THE FALL of 1988, the journal *Tikkun* published an article called "The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past." Its author was a relatively unknown historian named Benny Morris. A year before, Morris had brought out *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, a richly and rigorously detailed book that had not yet made much of a splash. His *Tikkun* article would fix that. In his article, Morris described himself and three of his confederates (Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappe from academia, and Simha Flappan from political journalism) as "new historians," arguing that they had together undertaken to expose the skeletons in Zionism's closet, to declare war on the dogmas of Israeli history. The label stuck, and soon the Israeli media was abuzz about the "new historians," who were catapulted into notoriety.

Morris also accused Israel of creating the Palestinian refugee problem, a charge that he had not levelled in his book. In his view, Israel bore a terrible burden of guilt. The vehemence of his accusations, and the moralizing tone in which they were delivered, fell on receptive ears: Morris was writing in the inflamed days of the Intifada. It is unlikely that the scholarly tomes of Morris and his fellow revisionists had many readers, but many Israelis were exposed to their heterodoxies in the media, which relish positions that are brief and barbed. And in this respect the "new historians" certainly delivered the goods. Suddenly an argument raged over the true nature of what Israelis call the War of Independence, or what Palestinians call *al-naqba* or the Catastrophe, or what historians call, more neutrally, the 1948 war. That war furnished the founding myth of the state of Israel; and it is but a short step from questioning its justice to doubting Israel's very right to exist.

In fact, the ideas advanced by Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappe, the vanguard of the "new historians," were nothing new. An anti-narrative of Zionism, counterposed to the Zionist (and Israeli) narrative of Zionism, had existed since the very inception of the Zionist movement. Opponents of the movement, Jewish and non-Jewish, had created an entire literature explaining what was foul in Zionism and why Zionism was destined to fail, and later why the state of Israel was an illegitimate and unjust construct that had to be resisted. The Soviet propaganda machine excelled in developing this anti-narrative, and in proliferating it. Arab propaganda also did its work. And at the margins of the Israeli left, there had always been groups and currents that doubted the right of Israel to exist and stressed the wrongs that were perpetrated against the Arabs. Yet those heretical elements remained marginal in Israeli politics and culture, and failed to gain wide public support. The advent of the "new historians" changed all that. These views now gained a certain legitimacy, since they appeared in the context of a debate between ostensibly objective scholars.

Revision in history is salutary. A critical look at premises refreshes historical inquiry and helps to generate new understanding. Every generation reexamines the present and the past under the impact of changing realities. Sometimes revisionism is the result of a generational shift among historians, and sometimes it springs from dramatic historical developments that throw an unexpected light on the past. The Vietnam War led American historians to reconsider certain accepted accounts of the cold war. Forty years after the end of World War II, a heated debate flared among historians in Germany about how to interpret the Nazi era: was it a rupture in Germany's past, or evidence of its continuity? Some British historians have responded to the belligerence of Thatcherism by attempting to rehabilitate Chamberlain and the Munich agreement. To be sure, not all revisions are laudable; the denial of the Holocaust is also a variety of revisionism. But historical revisionism does not take place in a vacuum. It is surrounded by politics. The revisionist scholar feels obligated to a particular political purpose, and proceeds with his research, and sometimes with his ready conclusions, to substantiate that purpose.

The "new historians" of Israel have not exactly pioneered fresh critical approaches in Israeli historiography. Already in the 1970s, scholars had begun to develop new and sophisticated views of Jewish-British relations under the Mandate, of Zionism's relation to the Arab problem, of the rise of the Arab national movement, of the nature of Zionism as the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. There was a tense and constant dialogue between collective memory and historical scholarship, as the new approaches slowly penetrated into the educational system and public consciousness. Since the advent of the "new historians," however, a new polarization has set

RIGHTEOUS VICTIMS:
A HISTORY OF THE ZIONIST–ARAB CONFLICT, 1881–1999
by Benny Morris
(Knopf, 751 pp., $40)

THE IRON WALL:
ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD SINCE 1948
by Avi Shlaim
(Norton, 704 pp., $32.50)

ANITA SHAPIRA, the Ruben Merenfeld Professor of the Study of Zionism at Tel Aviv University, is the author of *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Stanford University Press).

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in. For the "new historians" dismissed all previous historiography as apologetic. Whoever dares to oppose or to criticize the pronouncements of these self-styled iconoclasts is savagely maligned.

In 1996, for example, when the historian Ephraim Karsh charged that Benny Morris had falsified certain documents, Morris did not even deign to reply; instead he asserted that Karsh's article on "rewriting Israel's history" was replete with distortions and half-truths, and he went on to add: "His piece contains more than fifty footnotes but is based almost entirely on references to and quotations from secondary works, many of them of dubious value." A look at Karsh's notes indicates that thirty of his references actually refer to writings by Shlaim and Morris, and fifteen others cite primary sources, and the rest refer to studies by major historians such as Avraham Selah and to several books by journalists that Morris himself now adduces in his new book. Of dubious value, indeed.

The revisionist dispute quickly spilled over from history into sociology and cultural studies, as new topics and new heresies were added to those that treated the War of Independence and the relation to the Palestinians: the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine and its conduct during the Holocaust, the absorption of Holocaust survivors and Oriental Jewish immigrants, and so on. No longer were particular Zionist or Israeli figures impugned; Zionist ideology as a whole was now the real culprit. Several of the new school's devotees labelled themselves "post-Zionist," and charged that the "lunatic" ambition of Jews to transform themselves into a people with a state of their own was senseless, and opposed to the natural inclinations of the Jews. They claimed that the Jews had never been a people until the Zionists muddled their thinking, and had no desire for nationhood. Post-Zionism turned out to be a peculiar form of anti-Zionism. In contrast with the anti-Zionism of an earlier era, the post-Zionists made their peace with Israel's existence as a state. (It is hard to argue with success.) But they sought to undermine the state's moral and philosophical foundations, to dismantle the Jewish identity of the state and reconfigure it as a state of "all its citizens."

ACADEMIC DISPUTES TEND to thrive on their own momentum, even when the realities that gave rise to them have changed. The controversy about "the new historians" began during Yitzhak Shamir's tenure as prime minister, while the Intifada raged and Israeli politics was gridlocked. The debate fumed on during the Gulf war, when some Israelis with post-Zionist sympathies felt compassion for the embattled Iraqi ruler. It continued into the years of Rabin's premiership, as a kind of atonal accompaniment to the Oslo accords. But Rabin's assassination in 1995 took the wind out of the confrontation over the new historiography; and it is beginning to seem a little stale.

Now two new studies by major figures in the controversy have appeared. Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim appear to have mellowed, casting off their anti-establishment tunics for academic gowns. Shlaim is professor at St. Antony's, Oxford and Morris, who liked to portray himself as the innocent victim of the Israeli scholarly guild, currently holds an appointment as professor at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba. In both books, there are elements of Shlaim's and Morris's old and egregious views; but in both books there are also new elements, reflecting the changing times. About both books one can say that what is bad is not new and what is new is not bad.

Shlaim and Morris have both taken on the task, in a hefty tome each, of recounting the course of the Israeli-Arab dispute from its inception to the recent fall of the Netanyahu government. Shlaim devotes precious little space to the period prior to 1947, hastening on to the United Nations partition plan and the War of Independence; Morris accords nearly 200 pages to the period prior to the war in 1948. Shlaim is basically interested in political and diplomatic history, and minimizes his account of the wars; Morris treats the military operations in copious detail, in the War of Independence and in later conflicts.

Both studies are largely based on secondary sources. Only in those chapters that treat the subjects of their previous research do Shlaim and Morris ground their investigation on primary sources. The books do not pretend to scholarly innovation. They wish only to present an interpretive synthesis of the secondary sources. Such an approach is certainly valid, especially when the era involved is so close to our own—so close, indeed, that there are times when you cannot be sure whether today's headline might not up-end the chapter that you completed last night. In both books, the boundary between historical writing and journalistic writing eventually blurs.

One of the more serious charges raised against the "new historians" concerned their sparse use of Arab sources. In a preemptive move, Shlaim states at the outset of his new book that his focus is on Israeli politics and the Israeli role in relations with the Arab world—and thus he has no need of Arab documents. Morris claims that he is able to extrapolate the Arab positions from the Israeli documentation. Both authors make only meager use of original Arab sources, and most such references cited are in English translation.

Shlaim goes out of his way to praise the Israel State Archives for the access that it offers to scholars, unlike the archives of the Arab states, which are hermetically sealed to the outside. Yet the situation is really not that simple. In recent years, documents housed in the State Archives in Jordan have been made available to researchers. Many relevant memoirs published in Arabic have also appeared. And so one cannot attribute the scant use of the Arab sources in these two books solely to the relatively closed situation of research in the Arab world. Shlaim and Morris could have tried harder.

To write the history of relations between Israel and the Arab world almost exclusively on the basis of Israeli documentation results in obvious distortions. Every Israeli contingency plan, every flicker of a far-fetched idea expressed by David Ben-Gurion and other Israeli planners, finds its way into history as conclusive evidence for the Zionist state's plans for expansion. What we know about Nasser's schemes regarding Israel, by contrast, derives solely from secondary and tertiary sources. The same is true for the planning of defense ministers of Syria and their fantasies of a "Greater Syria." We are given no first-hand source for King Hussein's designs over the years other than what it was convenient for him to to tell Avi Shlaim in the ceremonious interview that he granted him not long before his death. (The somewhat fawning interview by this otherwise anti-Hashemite scholar appeared in *The New York Review of Books* last summer.) The upshot of all this methodological self-limitation is a history of the conflict in which one side completely disrobes, disclosing all its weaknesses and its flaws, while the other remains conveniently shrouded in the mystery of the veil.

MORRIS AND SHLAIM write diplomatic and military history, and hardly mention the political, social, and cultural dimensions of Israel and the Arab world. Can a conflict as profound as this one really be grasped without probing its psychological and cultural underpinnings? But Morris and Shlaim have chosen not to inquire into such realities—which is perfectly fair, except that they should also have chosen to adhere to high standards of factual accuracy even when treating topics with which they are not overly familiar. Lapses in accuracy are evident whenever the authors enter the realm of domestic and internal developments: Morris's account

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of the political landscape in the Yishuv during the 1920s is replete with errors, as is Shlaim's brief foray into Israeli politics at the end of the 1960s.

I will give only one example. Describing the political background of Levi Eshkol, who replaced David Ben-Gurion as prime minister in 1963, Shlaim tries to explain why Eshkol was consistently a liberal and a humanist who understood the need for dialogue with the Arabs. This is itself a dubious proposition; but Shlaim links Eshkol's alleged dovishness to his emigration to Palestine in 1914 as a representative of the left-wing youth movement Ha-Shomer ha-Tzair (The Young Watchman). But Ha-Shomer ha-Tzair was founded after Eshkol came to Palestine, and Eshkol was never a member of Ha-Shomer ha-Tzair, then or later.

Shlaim appears to have confused the moderate Palestinian political party Ha-Poel ha-Tzair (The Young Worker), founded in 1905, with the radical Zionist youth movement Ha-Shomer ha-Tzair established in Galicia and Poland during World War I. This detail would not be worth mentioning, except that Shlaim bases an entire explanation, an unfounded explanation, on a patent error. This is reminiscent of the pseudo-psychological interpretations to which the Israeli "new historians" sometimes resorted, as in their crude accounting for the moderation of Moshe Sharett (the foreign minister and second prime minister of Israel) by the biographical circumstance that when he was a boy his family lived for a time in an Arab village.

There is another striking similarity between Morris's book and Shlaim's book, and it is their very superficial treatment of the implications of the cold war for the Middle East. More serious attention to this dimension of the conflict could have led to an entirely different interpretation of the Israeli-Arab dispute: namely, that its worsening from the 1950s on was a by-product of the Soviet Union's penetration of the region beneath the cloak of radical Arab nationalism. It is a fact, after all, that a genuine window of opportunity for peace between Israel and the Arabs opened only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loss of its support to states and organizations on the hard-line front of rejection. Morris claims that one of the factors that led to a softening in the PLO's stance was fears about the influx of a million Jews from the former Soviet Union; but surely the buckling of the Soviet Union had something to do with that, too.

Blurring the aspects of superpower rivalry in the Middle East conflict makes it possible to present the conflict in isolation from world politics—that is, to present it moralistically. In both these books, there are two layers of research and argument: a deeper stratum, based on earlier research, that has a strong moralistic slant, and a newer level that expresses a more realistic approach to events. The older layer is far more ideological, and it is especially conspicuous in Shlaim's work. The evolution from moralism to realism is a reflection of the changing times in which these books were written, as the high tide of the peace process puts the past in a new light. These books start out as the story of the good guys and the bad guys, in the "new historical" manner, but somewhere along the way the plot thickens, as the writers' ideologies collide with the region's realities.

The bombing of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, March 11, 1948

II.

THE TITLE OF Avi Shlaim's book is an allusion to an article called "On the Iron Wall," by Zeev Jabotinsky, the Zionist leader and ideologue who founded the Revisionist movement in 1925. (Jabotinsky's famous essay was published in Russian in 1923 and in Hebrew in 1933.) The Revisionist movement functioned as the militant right wing of Zionism, and the Likud party views itself as the rightful heir of Jabotinsky's mantle. The concept of the "iron wall" posited that it was impossible in Palestine, as in any country of colonization, to avoid a clash between the indigenous population and the settlers. The Arabs of Palestine were a separate people, and they would not surrender the land without a struggle. Consequently, Jabotinsky argued, the only path forward for the Zionist project was the path of force: to erect an "iron wall" in the form of a Jewish battalion in the British army, which would halt Arab resistance.

The basic problem with Jabotinsky's conception was not philosophical, it was practical: there was no chance at all that the British would agree to setting up a Jewish army in British khaki. Jabotinsky's opponents in the labor movement disagreed with him not only on Zionist priorities, as Shlaim mentions, but also on what was realistic in the circumstances. They wished to postpone the explosion of the Arab-Jewish conflict for as long as possible. They believed that the sooner the Jewish-Arab conflict reached the flashpoint, the worse the Jewish prospects for victory; but the later the moment of truth, the better.

In its time, "On the Iron Wall" was considered a little mad, and divorced from reality; but Shlaim believes that Jabotinsky's essay reads today like a very clear-eyed view of future Jewish-Arab relations. Contrary to what he claims, Jabotinsky and his ideas had only a marginal influence on the ideas of the political elite in the Yishuv generally, and on Ben-Gurion in particular. But Shlaim nonetheless seizes on the concept of the "iron wall" as an organizing paradigm to explain the evolution of the politics of the Yishuv and the state of Israel from the 1920s to the 1980s.

According to Shlaim, Jabotinsky's achievement was to have foreseen that Arab acceptance of Jewish settlement in Palestine would come only after the Arabs were finally persuaded that they could never throw the Jews into the sea. Only then would they learn to speak about compromise; and the compromise, according

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to Jabotinsky's essay, would take the form of a generous autonomy within the framework of the Jewish state. In his epilogue, Shlaim observes:

> In a way, this is what has happened. The history of the state of Israel is a vindication of Jabotinsky's strategy of the iron wall. The Arabs—first the Egyptians, then the Palestinians, then the Jordanians—have recognized Israel's invincibility and were compelled to negotiate with Israel from a position of palpable weakness.

And so the revisionist endorses the Revisionist, and *les extrèmes se touchent.*

Shlaim's appropriation of the "iron wall" as the controlling idea of his book is far from coincidental. It is an effort by a "new historian" to get a handle on the highly fluid situation before his eyes, in which the old categories and the old enmities are changing and receding. The notion of the "iron wall" denotes a realistic perspective, and presupposes that the changes in Israeli and Arab consciousness are largely a function of power relations; and such realism implies that the making of peace between Israel and its neighbors was not the result of Israeli breast-beating, but the outgrowth of a mutual recognition that peace is desirable. Yet Shlaim balks at a full acceptance of realism and its implications, as he must; for it is deeply at odds with his older, more tendentious thinking. Deep down, Shlaim really does believe that the Middle East is Arab turf, and that the Palestinians are innocent victims, and that the Israelis are outsiders and intruders. Thus his book is sorely weakened by a kind of historian's cognitive dissonance. His recognition of the realities on the ground flies in the face of his deepest feelings. As a result, his book is divided against itself.

Shlaim's sentiments are revealed in his differing attitude toward Jews and Arabs. His approach to the latter is shaped by a kind of Realpolitik. After all, they are the indigenous inhabitants of the region; and so their actions require no justification, and are motivated by entirely understandable and self-evident interests. Yet Jews are repeatedly viewed through a moralistic prism: they are transgressors, and have come as invaders into the Arab East. Shlaim is prepared to accept the principle of national interest when it comes to the Arabs, but not when it comes to Israel. Israel's agreement with King Abdullah at the end of the war of 1948 is criticized for its instrumentality: "It was a striking example of the unsentimental Realpolitik approach that had dictated Israel's conduct throughout the first Arab-Israeli war." But Shlaim offers no criticism of Abdullah's takeover of the West Bank, or of Egypt's seizure of the Gaza Strip or of Syria's grab of territory west of the international frontier.

The same disparity obtains also for peace feelers. Shlaim assumes that it was legitimate for the Syrians and the Egyptians to demand from Israel half of the Sea of Galilee and portions of the Negev as the price for peace; but he deems Israel's refusal to agree to massive territorial concessions as sufficient reason to put the blame on the Jewish state for bungling the opportunities for peace. Shlaim is also sympathetic to Syrian views on the demilitarized zones along the Sea of Galilee. Even though this land was territory forcibly occupied by Syria in the War of 1948, Shlaim is vehement in castigating Israel for trying to extend its sovereignty over it. As a general principle, Shlaim rejects the right to seize land by force, when it is a question of Israel's territorial gains; but Syria's irredentism is different. Since the land that Syria seized was taken by a rightful Arab "owner," it should not be faulted. But all of Israel's territorial gains are illegitimate and have to be returned.

In Shlaim's book, Israel emerges as the neighborhood bully in the 1950s. The main villain is David Ben-Gurion, whose policy, in Shlaim's account, was essentially a harsh display of military muscle. The hero in the white hat, by contrast, was Moshe Sharett, the moderate foreign minister who is a darling of the "new historians." In truth, Sharett's perspective on the Israeli-Arab conflict did not differ in principle from Ben-Gurion's. He, too, did not believe in the prospects of peace in the foreseeable future. Yet he showed much greater respect for the United Nations, and he wanted Israel to avoid actions that would provoke international criticism. He also believed that Arab animosity could be diminished by Israel's refraining from aggressive military acts, hoping that eventually this would lead to a reconciliation.

In the Middle East in the 1950s, however, Sharett's approach hardly had a chance, considering the balance of power. Even in Shlaim's morally rigged account, the real situation of Israel in the 1950s is detectable. Between Shlaim's lines one can recognize a weak state, lacking in self-confidence, isolated. It had no source for the weapons that were necessary for its defense against the Soviet arsenal that began to pour into Egypt from the mid-1950s. Shlaim himself notes that Sharett's efforts to procure weapons came to naught:

> He returned empty-handed and deeply disillusioned. His unsuccessful and highly publicized mission only served to underscore Israel's international isolation in

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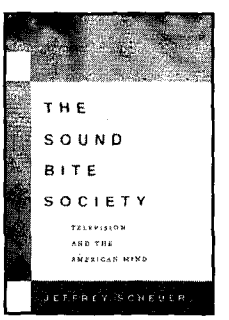

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the face of the rising tide of Egyptian military strength.

If this was indeed Israel's predicament, then maybe Ben-Gurion was right in his conviction that a bit of muscle-flexing by the fledgling state would prove useful.

In that same period, the Western powers treated Israel like a poor relative whose land they were trying to sell behind her back. In his famous Guild Hall speech in 1955, the British prime minister Anthony Eden demanded that Israel relinquish territory in the Negev in order to facilitate a land bridge between Egypt and Jordan. John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's secretary of state, entertained notions of finessing a peace deal between Israel and its neighbors, in which Israel would give up territory and agree to absorb 100,000 Arab refugees as the price for peace. Shlaim views those demands, which were really designed to strip Israel of territory that was allotted it by the United Nations in the partition plan of 1947, as legitimate demands. He does not utter a word about the questionable morality of the attempt by the great powers to violate massively the territory of a small state.

SHLAIM RECOUNTS THE Sinai Campaign as a grand conspiracy by Israel, France, and Britain. Israel is the main rogue in the cabal. And, as befits a moralistic tale, the bad guys lose. There is a pinch of malicious glee in Shlaim's account of the calamity of the belligerent Israelis, and of Ben-Gurion in particular, forced to climb down from the heights of victory to the pits of a forced pullback. Shlaim also tries his level best to prove that the Sinai war did not achieve its aims. He cannot deny that the Egyptian army was defeated, and the Straits of Tiran were opened, and the fedayeen bases in the Gaza Strip were destroyed. Still, he prefers to emphasize that Nasser was not removed from power, and Israel did not expand its territory, and a new order was not achieved in the Middle East. Shlaim makes no reference to the fact that in the wake of the Sinai Campaign, Israel enjoyed a decade of relative calm on the Israel-Egyptian frontier, and that the port of Eilat indeed remained open to international shipping, and that Israel's standing in the international arena was significantly enhanced. After 1956, schemes that resembled Eden's Guild Hall speech disappeared.

1958 was a stormy year in the Middle East. In Iraq, an army coup toppled the pro-Western government. In pro-Western Lebanon and Jordan, there were Nasserite attempts at subversion. President Eisenhower dispatched the Marines to Lebanon in order to forestall a possible collapse of pro-Western forces there. Israel was requested to allow British overflights for transporting troops to aid the Hashemite regime in Jordan. Shlaim takes a neutral stand when commenting on the subversive actions by pro-Nasserite forces. There are no "conspiracies" or "plots" here; he reserves those dark terms for the relations between Israel and King Abdullah, and for the Sinai Campaign. Nasser, after all, was an indigenous leader in the Arab East, and in Shlaim's eyes internecine Arab intrigue is not a fit subject for condemnation. Yet Shlaim is astounded that Israel should be so brazen as to even consider requesting recompense for having permitted Western powers to use its airspace: "Israel was not being asked to do anything to help Jordan, except to permit the use of its airspace. Nevertheless, Ben-Gurion earnestly hoped to get something in return for helping the Western powers."

The Americans and the British refused to bargain with Ben-Gurion about a military or political reward for his compliance with their requests. Yet when the Soviets threatened Israel for having opened its airspace to Western forces, and Ben-Gurion, deeply distressed, tried to cancel the permission for overflights, he was strongly rebuked by Dulles. The incident pointed up Israel's fundamental weakness, and its desperate search for allies against the threat posed by Nasser and Nasserism—and it pointed up also the exploitative attitude of the United States and Great Britain toward Israel at the time. In Shlaim's portrayal, however, Israel's positions are presented as demanding and immoderate. With another pinch of glee, he notes that Ben-Gurion's hopes for strategic cooperation with the West against the forces of radical Arab nationalism came to naught.

It was not until 1964 that an Israeli prime minister was officially welcomed at the White House, when Lyndon Johnson received Levi Eshkol. In their joint statement at the conclusion of the visit, Johnson proclaimed the need to maintain the territorial integrity of all the states in the region. Shlaim remarks that this was the first time Washington abandoned the idea of changing the borders of the 1949 armistice line. Such a fact, you might think, casts a different light upon Israel's search during those years for allies and arms. If even a government as friendly to Israel as the government of the United States was not prepared during that perilous time to guarantee the 1949 borders (what today is called the "Green Line"), then Israel's situation was in truth fraught with great danger, and Ben-Gurion's obsession with Israel's fragility was not illusory.

SHLAIM'S TENDENCY TO assume an air of objectivity toward Arab actions and to point a scolding finger at Israel is also conspicuous in his account of the deterioration that led to the Six-Day War. Meeting in Cairo in 1964, the Arab League resolved to divert the waters of the Jordan River, which are vital for Israel's existence. At that same conference, there was a public declaration of the intention to destroy Israel, and the PLO was founded. Shlaim avoids any judgment of those bellicose moves against Israel's very existence: after all, one must not berate the virtuous Arab determination to extirpate the foreign body from their midst.

Instead Shlaim dwells on the Israeli responses to the attempts to divert the Jordan River, responses that he deems disproportionate to the provocation. He blames the deterioration of the situation on those escalating Israeli responses—Israel used its air force to destroy the Syrian positions, and bombarded the Syrian water diversion project, after which the Syrians bombarded the kibbutzim along the Jordan—and on truculent statements by Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol against the Baath regime in Damascus. Yet he fails to make any mention of the role played by Moscow in inciting Nasser to send his army into Sinai by supplying the disinformation that Israel was concentrating "huge armed forces" near the Syrian border.

The Six-Day War is correctly portrayed by Shlaim as a defensive war; but he does not permit Israel to enjoy the laurels of a just victory for very long. From the outset, Shlaim is skeptical about Israel's readiness to relinquish land in return for peace. Thus, in his calendar of red-letter dates, he does not bother to note the Israeli government decision of June 19, 1967 declaring its willingness to pull back from conquered territory in return for peace. In marked contrast, Shlaim's presentation of the resolutions at the Arab summit conference at Khartoum in September, 1967—"no to recognition, no to negotiations, no to peace"—suggests that this thundering rejection actually disguised Nasser's readiness to reach a de facto agreement with Israel. Shlaim musters no real evidence for such a claim, aside from King Hussein's statement in his interview with Shlaim that Nasser had authorized him to seek a comprehensive peace; but the king's remark can be read differently—namely, that Nasser was cautioning Hussein in this way about daring to go it alone in attempting to conclude a separate peace with Israel. And even if we assume that Shlaim's reading of Hussein's remark is right, this is excellent evidence that nothing clears the mind like defeat: what Nasser was unprepared even to think about before the war, he was now ready to act on.

Beginning in 1967, Israeli-American

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relations passed through a dramatic transformation. The poor relative whom everyone wished to disclaim now became the recognized ally of Washington in the Middle East. Shlaim tells the story of this strategic transformation, but he does not ask the obvious question. What was the cause of this striking shift? How was it that Eisenhower and Dulles treated Israel with such contempt, while Nixon and Kissinger provided it with a huge arsenal and a deterrent against the Soviet Union, bolstered by financial aid, as did all the American presidents who followed? Was Israel led with greater wisdom in the 1970s and 1980s than in the 1950s and 1960s?

Probably not. The war of attrition, the massive bombing in Egypt, the fumble of chances for reaching an interim agreement with Egypt in 1971, the Yom Kippur War, the war in Lebanon: in all these episodes, Israel made mistakes and Israel botched opportunities. It proved fully as obstinate as in the 1950s, maybe more so. And yet, wondrously, those errors did not lead to a worsening of the conflict and to greater Israeli isolation, as might have been expected from Shlaim's moralistic interpretations.

Indeed, the outcome was the opposite. Starting in the 1970s, and increasingly so after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, President Sadat of Egypt demonstrated it was possible to recognize the state of Israel, and to enter into direct negotiations with Israel, and even to discuss a final peace agreement with Israel. Shlaim had presented all those possibilities as impossibilities, as unshakable Arab taboos. Every time Israel came forward with such a condition, Shlaim depicted it as a mere tactic designed to blame the other side for the failure of negotiations. And then, all of a sudden, Israel and Egypt were prepared to act on what they had not even dreamed of a few short years before. The Israelis were ready to withdraw from all of Sinai, and the Egyptians were ready to reach a separate peace accord with Israel.

Shlaim does not ask how this extraordinary turn came about, because the answer is self-evident. The answer is that power did its sobering work, and realism came to be preferred to moralism. Initially, the military might that Israel demonstrated in the Six-Day War had opened Washington's eyes to the importance of this potential ally for stability in the Middle East, not least as a brake on Soviet influence in the region. After the Six-Day War, Israel became somewhat intoxicated with its own strength; but six years later the Yom Kippur War returned Israel to its senses, and put a stop to the triumphalist flights of fancy following the triumph of 1967. Concomitantly, the war in 1973 provided Sadat with the legitimacy to reach a separate peace with Israel, even as it demonstrated that Israel could not be coerced into an agreement. It seems that all sides involved in the Middle East conflict had recognized the validity of a realistic approach.

The realism of the "iron wall" also applied to the Palestinians. After all the terror acts perpetrated by Palestinian organizations in the 1970s and '80s, which Shlaim skips over nonchalantly, the Intifada erupted in December 1987. It demonstrated to Israelis and Palestinians alike that force was not the answer. The uprising led to a moderating of the PLO's hardline positions: the Palestinians were now prepared to recognize Israel's right to exist and even to accept the U.N. decision of 1947 on partition—to accept the principle of two states and thus to renounce terror. Once again, then, what Shlaim believed was non-negotiable for the Palestinians became negotiable. It took four decades, to be sure; but four decades is not an unreasonably long time in the context of ethnic and religious and national conflicts.

Shlaim's fitful oscillation between ideological judgment and Realpolitik is manifest also in his account of the Gulf War. Israel acted with admirable restraint in that war, in not responding to the Scud attacks by Saddam Hussein. We would have expected Shlaim to give Israel a medal for good conduct. Instead he instructs that Israel's failure to act dented its reputation as a military great power in the eyes of its adversaries! In the event, Shlaim further observes, the United States shifted closer to the Arab states. When Israel pursues the moderate policies lauded by Shlaim, it forfeits its deterrent ability and its status as Washington's main ally in the region; and when it acts immoderately, it is simply villainous. Israel is damned if it does and damned if it doesn't.

SHLAIM HAS HIS loves and his hates, and he sticks to them. His profound contempt for David Ben-Gurion infuses his account of the man and his politics with a diabolical dimension. As a rule, the "new historians" like to associate everything evil with the figure of Ben-Gurion. He is identified more than anyone else with the establishment of the state and the policies that it has pursued.

Ben-Gurion created the self-image of a strong personality, a leader not afraid to defy the entire world. I would even conjecture that he regarded his image as one of the weapons in Israel's deterrent arsenal. But the truth about Ben-Gurion was more complicated and more humane. Behind the bravura was a man who feared for the fate of the young state. Not everything

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that Ben-Gurion did or said was worthy of praise; he sometimes made mistakes and he sometimes talked folly. But ultimately he was the man of the status quo of 1949, not the pugnacious ruffian of territorial conquest that Shlaim portrays.

Ben-Gurion was able to foresee—in the spirit of the "iron wall," though without any link to Jabotinsky—that the Arabs would try again and again to destroy Israel, until they finally despaired of a military solution and came to terms with Israel's existence. (The Revisionists were not the only Zionists who grasped the realities of power.) In the meantime, Israel had to remain strong, and build a solid and stable society, and grow demographically, and seek out allies among the great Western powers.

Despite pressure from the military, Ben-Gurion did not launch an operation to capture Mt. Hebron at the end of the War of Independence. A long process of persuasion was necessary before Moshe Dayan convinced him to embark on the Sinai Campaign, and even then he agreed to act only after he had been promised air cover by the French. He feared Soviet involvement, and Bulganin's threat in 1956 to dispatch "volunteers" to the Middle East was reason enough to order a pullback from the Sinai Peninsula. If ever Ben-Gurion entertained dreams of territorial expansion, they dissolved with the withdrawal from Sinai.

When Yitzhak Rabin, then chief of staff, came to seek Ben-Gurion's advice on the eve of the Six-Day War, Rabin was rebuked for having placed Israel in danger of possible war while the country lacked a great power ally. Ben-Gurion demanded that the army dig in, stay put, and not launch an attack on Egypt. After the war, he declared that all the land won in the war would be exchanged for peace, except for Jerusalem. He was very far from being the terror of the neighborhood that the "new historians" depict.

In contrast with Shlaim's enmity for Ben-Gurion, he is strangely enamored of the leaders of the right, Jabotinsky and Begin. Jabotinsky is presented as Ben-Gurion's veritable mentor and guide, which is a truly bizarre notion. Shlaim even has Jabotinsky exerting an influence on Rabin, though there is no doubt Rabin never read a page that Jabotinsky wrote. It is true that Jabotinsky was a liberal, and ready to guarantee the Arabs minority rights within the Jewish state; but in this respect he was no different from the other Zionist leaders. All of them, Ben-Gurion included, spoke in the same conciliatory spirit. There is no reason to believe Jabotinsky and not believe the others.

Shlaim shows a similarly inexplicable admiration for Menachem Begin. While he brushes aside Ben-Gurion's apprehensions about the fate of Israel with cynical skepticism, he musters profound understanding for Begin's fears. Shlaim argues that the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1982 was not carried out for electoral reasons; the timing of the Israeli action, he explains, was owed to Begin's genuine anxiety about Israel's future, to fears rooted in his own experience in the Holocaust. Shlaim accepts uncritically and at face value Begin's flagrant appropriation of images of the Shoah in the war in Lebanon; it is only on rare occasions that Shlaim criticizes Begin for exploiting the great Jewish tragedy for political gain. And many Israelis would be astounded to read about "Begin's Churchillian style of leadership."

Palestinians fleeing Jaffa, April 1948

Shlaim prefers the Israeli right to the Israeli left. After all, Jabotinsky looked the Arab problem straight in the eye, without flinching, and acknowledged the national character of the Arabs, and even sketched a model that would grant Arabs future rights. But the Israeli left (which includes Labor Zionism) is, in Shlaim's eyes, hypocritical and inauthentic, with all its moral perplexity and its overblown sensitivity, aspiring to a brand of Zionism with humanistic and socialist elements, and attempting to dodge the problem as long as it was not acute. For Shlaim, this camp, which founded the state, is ultimately responsible for the tragedy of the Palestinians.

Shlaim interprets Jabotinsky's "iron wall" as a two-stage scenario: first there would be conflict, when the Jews would curb and beat down the Arabs by military might, and then there would be reconciliation, when the Jews would grant the Arabs a mode of autonomy, including national rights. Now Shlaim has decided that the first stage, the nasty stage, is over. The time has come for reconciliation. But he evades the pivotal question in Israeli politics. When does the hour of peace arrive? For the left and the right do not have the same answers to this question. For the right, peace will come when Israeli sovereignty is guaranteed over the entirety of the Land of Israel, over Greater Israel. (*That* is how Jabotinsky and Begin, Shlaim's favorites, conceived the condition of peace.) For the left, peace will come when the Palestinians are prepared to assent to the principle of partition and to recognize the right of the existence of two peoples in the land west of the Jordan. For this reason, it is the heirs of the pragmatic tradition of Ben-Gurion and Weizmann—and not the heirs of the inflexible tradition of Jabotinsky—who are the genuine peacemakers today.

The old attempts to justify Arab rejectionism over the years, and to blame the frustration of peace initiatives on Israeli inflexibility, now seem outdated: all the things that symbolized Israeli "intransigence," all the things that were supposed to have made peace impossible (recognition of Israel, direct peace negotiations, bilateral agreements as against a comprehensive peace) are now possible, and even actual. Shlaim recognizes that the situation has fundamentally changed; but the older prejudices continue to tug at him. Thus, in the conclusion to his book, he returns to the hoary arguments that pre-

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sent the Israelis as foreign invaders:

> The moral case for the establishment of an independent Jewish state was strong, especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust. But there is no denying that the establishment of the State of Israel involved a massive injustice to the Palestinians. Half a century on, Israel still had to arrive at the reckoning of its own sins against the Palestinians, a recognition that it owed the Palestinians a debt that must at some point be repaid.

It is not clear what Shlaim exactly has in mind by "sins." If he means the establishment of the state itself, well, he himself states that there was a strong moral case for its creation. If he is referring to the war of 1948, well, he himself notes elsewhere that the Arabs forced it upon Israel. If he is alluding to the fact that the Arab Palestinians did not establish a state in 1948, because they were stymied by Israel, surely he should place the blame for that first and foremost on the Palestinians themselves, and on their Arab brethren. Or was Israel supposed to take the initiative in creating a Palestinian state?

What remains is the refugee issue, a truly festering wound. And in this awful matter, there is a lot of guilt to go around. As Benny Morris argues, the blame for the misery of the Palestinian refugees must be shared by several parties. But the morally laden concepts mustered by Shlaim lay the guilt in no uncertain terms at one door only—at Israel's door. This passage reads like a remnant of an earlier time, a more inflamed and more brutal time that we should be glad to see gone.

III.

THE TITLE OF Benny Morris's book is something of a surprise. Who are the "righteous victims"? Is Morris ironically alluding to the tendency of both sides in the conflict to claim a monopoly on truth and justice, and to be deaf to the views of the adversary, as Morris himself says in one of his more incisive passages? Or are both sides right, and victims of the historical situation or their own nationalist aspirations? Morris does not explain.

Indeed, Morris's work is innocent of any attempt at conceptualization. His method is a sort of muddling through. In every chapter he presents the culprits and the casualties of the given moment. In most instances, the result is quite balanced. Thus, while Shlaim accuses Israel of consciously renouncing the various chances for peace after 1949, Morris contends that leaders on both sides failed to utilize the opportunities that presented themselves. Regarding infiltration in the 1950s, Shlaim claims that Arab countries did everything possible to curb the infiltrators; and he relies, for proof, only on King Hussein's comment in his interview with him: "We had done everything that we could to prevent infiltration and to prevent access to Israel." Surely a historian is obliged to find better evidence for his findings than the word of a king. Morris, by contrast, blames the Arab regimes for some of the infiltration activity, especially in the Gaza Strip, noting that Israeli reprisals induced the Egyptians and the Jordanians to take measures to stem infiltration.

While stressing every Israeli attack on ostensibly innocent Arabs, Shlaim avoids any mention of Arab atrocities against Jews. Morris, on the other hand, points to a number of cases of murder and violence perpetrated by Arab infiltrators and fedayeen in the 1950s, and even devotes an entire chapter to the secret war between Israel and the terror organizations. Unlike Shlaim, Morris is uninterested in the development of Arab nationalism. In his view, Nasser was not a hero but a dictator leading his people astray. For this reason, his account of the Sinai Campaign lacks Shlaim's moral fervor. Morris takes Nasser's threats against Israel seriously.

In describing the tense period of waiting in the run-up to the Six-Day War, Morris underscores the national hysteria that engulfed the Arab states, articulated in calls for Israel's destruction. Shlaim passes over the frenzy in silence. After the war, moreover, Morris does not flow with compassion for Nasser; he views him as a scoundrel and a failed tyrant. Morris's account of Israeli rule in the occupied territories is detailed and critical, and he does not conceal from the reader distressing events that illustrate the invidious influence of the "corruptive occupation"; but here, too, his moral judgements do not overwhelm his historiographical duty. "Though harsh and often brutal," he adds, "Israeli rule in general was never as restrictive or repressive as the Palestinians made out."

There is one topic on which Morris departs from his admirably matter-of-fact attitude: the notorious topic of "transfer." The notion of "transfer" was commonly accepted in the period between the two world wars to designate population exchanges such as occurred between Turkey and Greece in the 1920s. "Transfer" became a code word in contemporary Israeli politics after the emergence of the far right radical party Moledet (Homeland) in the 1980s, led by Rehavam Zeevi. Moledet advanced the idea of transfer, or the removal of the Palestinians from the West Bank, as part of its party platform; and in order to gain legitimacy for himself and his party, Zeevi declared that he was following in the footsteps of the founders of the labor movement from its very inception, that "transfer" was vintage Zionist thinking.

The attempt to attribute the sins of the present to Zionism's founding fathers is a hallmark of the politics of the Israeli right: thus the members of Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) present themselves as the rightful heirs to the pioneer heritage in the pre-state period. Zeevi seized on statements on transfer from the 1930s, articulated in substantially different circumstances, in order to justify such repulsive actions in our own time. And in this matter, it would seem, the interests of the Israeli right and the "new historians" dovetail. It is no coincidence that revisionist ideas were sympathetically received in the ranks of the right. The "new historians" are intent on demonstrating that there was never a golden age of simplicity and innocence in the Zionist movement, and that its founders were full of guilt and guile from the start; and those on the right are keen to show that what is repudiated today as immoral was not an idea that they invented, but rather a part of the Zionist heritage. In both cases, the result is the libeling of Zionism and the undermining of its moral foundations.

Morris addressed the question of transfer after he had published his important study on the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem in 1948. His book's much-cited conclusion states that

> [t]he Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Jewish and Arab fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterized the first Arab-Israeli war; in smaller part, it was the deliberate creation of Jewish and Arab military commanders and politicians.

This is a balanced assessment that is corroborated by the evidence. But Morris was attacked by Arab historians, notably Nur Masalha, and even by his colleagues Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappe, who argued that his own documentation justified a harsher verdict. Perhaps as a consequence of these criticisms, Morris undertook a partial revision of his findings. What in his earlier book was an ugly but unintended and even unanticipated by-product of war becomes in his new book one of the foundations of Zionism:

> The transfer idea goes back to the fathers of modern Zionism and, while rarely given a public airing before 1937, was one of the main currents in Zionist ideology from the movement's inception.

According to Morris's new version, just

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as the idea of transfer attended Zionism from its inception, so did Arab fears of precisely such a scheme. The inference from this line of reasoning is that the Arabs resisted Jewish settlement not because they regarded themselves as Palestine's rightful owners and did not wish to share the land with a people whom they perceived as a foreign invader; nor because they were opposed to transforming Palestine from a land with a predominantly Muslim culture into a non-Muslim country steeped in Western culture. No, their motive was well-founded fear: they *knew* that the Jews intended in due time to expel them. As Morris writes, "the fear of territorial displacement and dispossession was to be the chief motor of Arab antagonism to Zionism down to 1948 (and indeed after 1967 as well)." In this way history is spun on its head, and the effect is made into the cause, and the result of war is promoted into the paradigm for the entire complex of relations between Arabs and Jews over several decades.

Zionist leaders always believed that the hoped-for Jewish majority in Palestine would materialize by means of massive Jewish immigration. It should not be forgotten that in 1920 the Arab population of Palestine numbered only some 600,000. The Zionist premise—which history has proven right—was that there was land aplenty in western Palestine for millions of Jews *and* Arabs. All the Zionist plans at the end of the 1930s envisioned the influx of a million Jews to Palestine within a decade. That magical number was geared to guaranteeing a Jewish majority, which is why the Arabs were so hostile to immigration: not because they were afraid of expulsion, but because they wished to prevent a demographic transformation.

Zionism has been one of the best documented and the most talkative of national movements. Its records are not limited to the sphere of political activity and diplomacy, on which Morris and the "new historians" tend to focus; they include also all the educational and propagandistic work over many years within all the warring fractions and currents that comprised the movement. Despite all this documentation, however, all the efforts by Morris and others to dig up actual evidence of the early roots of the "transfer" idea have unearthed only isolated and fragmentary statements—secret thoughts and wishes, but nothing remotely resembling a program.

The idea of transfer was broached in serious discussion for the first time in 1937, when the Peel Commission proposed to transfer the large Arab minority from the territory designated for the tiny Jewish state as part of the package deal that envisioned a partitioning of western Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab. In accordance with the Commission's proposals, the British were to carry out the transfer. Morris declares that "it is reasonable to assume that the Zionist leaders played a role in persuading the Peel Commission to adopt the transfer solution." There is not even a sliver of evidence to support such a claim, which is very far removed from what any credible historian may reasonably assume. It is perfectly legitimate for Morris to surmise that the Zionists did not lament the Peel Commission proposal, and even rejoiced at it. But such gladness is a long way from the unsubstantiated presumption that they were implicated in its formulation.

It is also true that Ben-Gurion and his associates welcomed the British idea to transfer Arabs from the small area set aside for the Jewish state. In Ben-Gurion's efforts at the Twentieth Zionist Congress in 1937 to drum up support for adoption of the partition plan, he made use of the concept of transfer in order to persuade his comrades to accept the tiny state proposed by the Commission, since the Jews would be a large majority there. The idea of transfer was a lure designed to convince Zionists to swallow the bitter pill of partition. In later years, Ben-Gurion warned of the dangers inherent in embracing the idea of transfer as a Zionist program, even after the British Labour Party had chosen to incorporate it in its platform.

Morris recalls that, over a prolonged period, Arab leaders declared that the true aim of Zionism was to uproot and to expel the Arabs, while the Zionists claimed there was ample room in Palestine for both peoples. But, as Morris adds,

> the stark realities of the 1930s, with wholesale persecution in Central and Eastern Europe and with Britain closing the gates to Jewish immigration, seems to prove the Arabs right. Palestine would not be transformed into a Jewish state unless all or much of the Arab population was expelled.

Otherwise, Morris explains, a Jewish majority could not be achieved.

This argument boggles the mind. If we are speaking about the mandatory period, then the British, who did not permit Jewish immigration, most certainly would not have endorsed any plan of Arab transfer. If we are speaking about a future with Palestine under Jewish rule, then the Jewish authorities would have been able to bring in millions of Jews unhindered and thereby to resolve the question of the dominant majority without resorting to expulsion. What had fueled a massive wish to leave Europe was the calamitous situation of the Jews there, the "wholesale persecution" mentioned by Morris.

However you interpret it, in other words, there is not a shred of evidence that Zionist ideology changed in the 1930s; not a shred of evidence that the transfer idea supplanted the idea of immigration as a means to achieve a Jewish majority in Palestine. But still Morris claims that, starting with the Peel Commission, the idea of transfer enjoyed a general consensus in virtually all the Zionist bodies. His book lacks any notes indicating which deliberations (and how many deliberations) he is referring to, and it is thus impossible to determine whether the sources corroborate his contention.

In the same manner, Morris links the broaching of transfer within the context of the discussions on partition in 1937 with the creation of the refugee problem in

Poem of the Twentieth Century

On Charlie Simic's tape
of great girl singers from the 1920s
I love the song with the lines
you're wonderful
but I could be wrong
I think I'll write a poem
in which every second line admits
that I could be wrong I'll call it
"Poem of the Twentieth Century"
every line will begin with a year
1905: Einstein said light consists
of quanta and behaves like both
waves and particles
but I could be wrong
1964: Surgeon General declares
smoking hazardous to your health
but I could be wrong
Some say the century began
when you could measure either
the position or the velocity
of a moving object, not both,
I say it began in June 1948
but I could be wrong

David Lehman

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1948: "The idea was in the air from 1937 onward and without doubt contributed in various ways to the transfer that eventually took place, in 1948." Morris presents the expulsion as if it were the outcome of some Zionist master plan. There is no hard evidence for the existence of such a master plan, but never mind. The idea, "without doubt," was "in the air."

THE ISRAELI-ARAB conflict was not born as a consequence of anxieties about expulsion. It was born as a consequence of Arab resistance to the settlement of a foreign element in their land. The feeling of power among the Palestinian Arabs, who believed they were the rightful proprietors of Palestine and were unwilling to enter into any sort of compromise agreement with the Jews, contradicts the argument based on their alleged fears about eviction. The Palestinians did not go to war in 1948 because they were afraid the Jews would oust them; they went to war because they were not prepared to make their peace with the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The Palestinian Arabs also believed that they would emerge the victors. The question of what they intended to do with the Jews in Palestine after a Jewish defeat on the battlefield is, of course, hypothetical. After the defeat, the flight, and the expulsion of the Palestinians, moreover, the subject is unmentionable: such questions are raised only about the victors. When the peace process comes to a conclusion, documents may be disclosed that shed valuable light on this point; but in the meantime the issue can be examined only in terms of the historical facts that we possess. And those facts, alas, are unequivocal: in all areas where the Jews went down to defeat at the hands of the Arabs, not a single Jew was allowed to return.

On both sides, Arab and Jewish, there was a composite of flight and expulsion. Jews fled in fear from mixed neighborhoods such as the border areas between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, and even from Jaffa itself. There were some 10,000 Jewish refugees in the early stages of the war. Gush Etzion, on the road between Bethlehem and Hebron, was captured by the Arab Legion and local Palestinian forces: the inhabitants were killed or taken prisoner and carried across the Jordan. Their settlements were completely demolished. The settlements Neveh Ya'akov and Atarot north of Jerusalem, also captured, were totally obliterated. All the residents of the Jewish quarter in the Old City in Jerusalem, conquered by local forces with the aid of the Arab Legion, were taken captive. No Jew was allowed to return to settle in the Old City—not even the ultra-Orthodox who detested Zionism and were prepared to live under Arab rule.

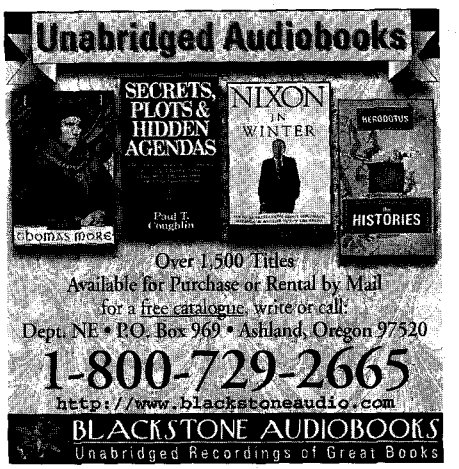
With the heightening of the national conflict between the two peoples, the prospect of living together one under the rule of the other became less and less palatable. Propaganda stoked mutual fears. The Jews were convinced that the Arabs were going to throw them into the sea, because that is what the Arabs said that they would do. The Arabs feared what the Israeli army might do to them, since Arab opinion-makers had painted the Israeli army in devilish colors.

The Arab panic led to exodus, and to the collapse of the institutions of Palestinian society. The more the magnitude of the exodus became clear, the more admissible and attractive the idea seemed to Israeli leaders and military commanders—not because the Zionist movement had been planning such an evacuation all along, but because a remote option (even if there were some who harbored such hankerings) gained acceptance in the context of the behavior of both sides during the war.

THE PROCESS OF Jewish-Palestinian reconciliation has been bound up with a readiness for mutual recognition, and for mutual assent to the co-existence of two states in western Palestine. Both sides found it difficult to recognize the existence and the legitimacy of the other. And historians also have their difficulties coming to terms with that reality. From the post-Oslo perspective, the question arises whether there could have been shortcuts in that process, as suggested by the allegation of the "new historians" that Israel missed various opportunities for peace in the past.

We must be careful not to view the outcomes of events as inevitable; but we must also not trivialize the conflict. It is doubtful whether a confrontation of such emotional and psychological depth as the Israeli-Arab dispute can be resolved solely by rational means, by appealing to the disadvantages that war entails for both parties. History shows that such conflicts usually have not been ended by reason and good will. They have usually been ended by weariness, as both sides were ground down by the death and the bitterness, and both sides came to realize that victory is unattainable. In a discussion of the development of Zionism since Herzl, the Israeli historian Jacob Talmon once adduced this observation by Friedrich Engels:

> History is perhaps the cruelest goddess of all, and she drives her victorious chariot upon heaps and heaps of bodies, not just in time of war, but also during peaceful economic development. And alas, we men and women are such fools that we never dare to venture out for any real



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And so the dialogue between history and historiography will continue. If it turns out that the hopes for an Israeli-Arab peace were premature, then the picture of the past will also be soured, and the currents critical of Israel will almost certainly be strengthened. If the peace process is carried forward to a successful conclusion, and Israel is welcomed as a fully recognized polity among the states of the Middle East, then a perspective on the past will be reinforced whose rudiments are already evident, though only intermittently in the writings of Avi Shlaim and Benny Morris: the perspective of realism. When reality comes more closely to approximate our moral ideals, moralism will become redundant. We will see this thick and twisted conflict more accurately and more humanely. And the power of discourse may succeed where the power of arms has failed.

—Translated by William Templer

Scored for Life

By PAUL STARR

The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy by Nicholas Lemann

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 406 pp., $27)

IT HAS BEEN an enormous change, more profound than the mere circulation of elites that often follows political revolutions. Since 1945, elite institutions in the United States that were once almost entirely the preserve of white high-church Protestant men have opened their doors—first to Jews and Catholics in the early postwar years and then, in a second opening, to blacks, Asians, and Hispanics, and to women, in the 1960s and 1970s. During the same period, higher education has also become far more important as a way to the top of American society, and even to the middle class. Scarcely anyone doubts, at least in public, that these changes have been for the better. They have made America a more just society and contributed to the nation's prosperity, power, and cultural vitality.

But is this transformation incomplete because the criteria for admissions and advancement are imperfect or biased or corrupt? Or, worse yet, is it a fraud? Has one elite favored by birth merely given way to another, supposedly based on merit, but no more deserving and just as self-interested? Criticism of the meritocracy dates from the 1960s, when the new radicalism identified higher education as simply the latest "mask for privilege." (The phrase "meritocracy" came from Michael Young, a British sociologist and social democrat, who worried that the new educated ruling elite would have so powerful a basis of legitimacy as to make inequality even harder to reduce.)

The opening up of the universities to blacks and Hispanics also brought out a previously hidden tension. The first postwar opening of the elite institutions to the children and the grandchildren of European immigrants coincided with the introduction of standardized educational testing. Although selective colleges continued to pay attention to other characteristics of students, performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) began to count heavily in admissions. At that time, testing worked in favor of the new groups, as it did later for Asians; but blacks and Hispanics didn't do as well. For blacks and Hispanics, therefore, the tests amounted to an obstacle to admission, and accordingly the tests came under fire for alleged bias. And many people besides advocates of affirmative action have also worried about the limits of the SAT (or of any multiple-choice test) as a measure of ability, much less of merit more broadly conceived. If high-status positions depend on admissions to selective colleges, and admissions in turn depend on tests that are, in some measure, arbitrary, is the system fair and reasonable?

In a society with a strong populist streak, it would be asking too much to expect any system of elite selection to be universally approved. The very idea of an elite is suspect, and there is no agreed-upon ranking of different abilities. If the Congress had ever expressly debated whether America ought to have a national system of testing to determine which people would end up occupying much of society's upper tier, the system could probably never have been enacted. Still, as a result primarily of private decisions, we do have such a system, and for the past half century it has occupied a central place in the experience of nearly everyone growing up in America with aspirations not just to high status, but also to the good life.

NICHOLAS LEMANN'S BOOK tells how this system came about. The book is a high achievement. It provides a rich account of the people and the institutions involved in the rise of educational testing and the turn toward meritocracy in major universities, as well as the later struggle over affirmative action. One value of historical inquiry is that it can lay bare long-forgotten choices that created the seemingly settled world that we have today. The standardized testing system confronts every student and teacher as a fact of life, yet as facts of life go, it is a recent one: just five decades old. Who decided things should be this way? What were they hoping to achieve? Why did this particular system prevail over others? Since most of the critical decisions about testing and admissions were not governmental, they were not matters of public record. Before Lemann's book, the full story was little known, even by people who work on these issues.

Lemann has clearly put years of research into his book, no less than would be expected of a full-scale academic study, though his book is more entertaining. And while he is highly critical of testing, he has enjoyed the cooperation of key institutions, notably the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the maker of the SAT. Like any good historian, he has trolled their archives for pertinent and lively material; but he has also interviewed many of the people who figure prominently, or even only incidentally, in the events that he is relating. *The Big Test* is a pleasure to read not least owing to Lemann's ability to tell the life stories of these people so well while developing his larger narrative. But the book is a narrative rather than an analysis, and so it leaves some important questions unanswered. In the last section of the book, when he turns to the battle over affirmative action in California, Lemann gets too caught up in side stories, and he fails to bring the narrative threads to a satisfying conclusion. Still, this is a major work of contemporary history that ought

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to be read by anyone interested in understanding the development of American society during the past half-century.

As Lemann describes it, the rise of testing and the meritocracy in America began with what might be called a status revolution from above. The key instigators came from the heart of the Protestant establishment, though they were in some ways detached from it. Max Weber could not have dreamed up a more perfect figure to be the historical agent for rationalizing the choice of the elect than Henry Chauncey, who became the first president of ETS in 1945. (In his mid-nineties today—"a miracle of geriatric robustness," as Lemann calls him—Chauncey served as a direct source for the book.)

The Chaunceys trace their lineage back to a Puritan minister who emigrated to Massachusetts in 1637 out of dissatisfaction with the lax rules of the Church of England, only to find that the Puritans in the New World were also, in his eyes, too lax. Another member of the family, a leading Boston minister in the mid-1700s, believed in the need for a disciplined, trained elite. It was as if Henry Chauncey distilled the faith of his ancestors into a modern scientific form when early in his career he became an enthusiast of mental testing as a means of improving the organization of society. Although Chauncey's immediate family was not wealthy (his father was also a minister), he went to Groton and Harvard, where he became an assistant dean and a protégé of Harvard's president, James Bryant Conant.

It was Conant, a chemist by training, who publicly articulated the grand vision for reforming higher education in America, not by enlarging it (he opposed the GI Bill) but by admitting to selective colleges the most intelligent students and preparing them for positions of public service and influence. This group would be the modern fulfillment of an ideal that Conant derived from Jefferson of a "natural aristocracy" of virtue and talent, yet they would somehow have no social standing above anyone else. For Lemann, Conant's ideas are the founding illusion of the meritocracy, and they are certainly a fat target for criticism.

But how change happened, or at least got started, may not explain why it happened. Conant's vision does not explain why all the private universities, some sooner, some later, began recruiting high achievers outside the old WASP elite, or why law firms, banks, and many other organizations went through similar changes. Larger forces were at work that Lemann's narrative does not always disclose. The open, competitive structure of American society would have imposed substantial, long-run costs on any institution that kept its doors shut. A university that limited its faculty and students in Cold War America would have lost grant money, prestige, and ultimately endowment; the opening up of the old elite institutions is what saved them from decline.

But why did ETS and the SAT triumph over other organizations and other tests? In some industries such as software, early advantages enable one organization to gain market share, spread fixed costs over a large customer base, and lock in dominance regardless of whether the company has the best product, much less the ideal one. This appears to have been the pattern in educational testing. ETS benefited from early sponsorship and cost advantages that it used to lock in a monopoly position. As Lemann tells the story, Conant and other university presidents, as well as foundation executives, intervened in the late 1940s to give ETS the central role in test-making, while the College Board became the owner of the tests. In 1951, at a difficult point in its history, ETS won a contract to administer a test for the Selective Service that proved to be an enormous financial bonanza.

From the start, low cost was a critical advantage for the SAT over the College Board's earlier examination, which was more expensive to score. Moreover, the SAT didn't threaten high schools, because it purported only to measure an innate characteristic, scholastic aptitude; ostensibly, aggregate test results could not be used to assess school performance. The huge expansion of college enrollment in the postwar era created a growing institutional demand for a screening mechanism of some kind; and the SAT was a low-cost solution to this problem that did not challenge any of the institutions whose cooperation it required.

Early in the history of testing, critics raised objections to the tests as a measure of merit. As Lemann shows in one of the most revealing aspects of the history, Chauncey himself long tried to measure other abilities through tests of personality, but none of those tests could command the same consensus support as the SAT. The weight given the SAT partly reflects the difficulty and the high cost of obtaining more complete assessments. The elite private colleges, which enjoy not only greater resources but also more discretion, do give more weight to subjective judgments of students' potential (as well as less legitimate factors, such as their family's wealth). It has been the big state universities, with their more formalized, quantitative criteria for admissions, that

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have relied most on SAT scores as well as grades. And partly because the link between testing and the meritocracy is actually greater in the public sector of education than in the private sector, the controversy over the use of test scores in minority admissions has been more acute and explicit there.

As Lemann's narrative proceeds, therefore, the scene of the story moves from the elite private colleges to the state system that by the 1960s had become the very model of what a great modern university ought to be. This was the University of California; and its chancellor, Clark Kerr, becomes the third major figure, after Chauncey and Conant, in Lemann's tale of the making of the new social hierarchy. A labor relations expert, Kerr formulated the Master Plan for higher education in California. Unlike Conant's vision, Kerr's plan accommodated the demand for vastly expanded popular access to college but still reserved a more privileged tier of campuses for the high-achieving elite.

In the nuanced and sympathetic portrait that Lemann draws, Kerr emerges as a tragic figure. Just at the moment in the 1960s when his ideas about higher education were triumphant, he fell victim to the conflict between the emerging radical movement at Berkeley and conservative backlash in the state. One of Ronald Reagan's decisions after taking office as governor was to remove Kerr. While Kerr fell, however, the design that he established for higher education endured; life narratives do not always mirror the history of institutions.

THIS LACK OF fit between individual biographies and the larger history becomes a serious problem in the last portion of Lemann's book, as he takes up the battle over affirmative action in California, culminating in the passage in 1996 of Proposition 209, which banned the use of race in university admissions. Once again, he tells the stories of people whose lives cross in the struggle; but while their stories are interesting, they do not clearly advance the overall narrative. Worse yet, it is not clear what Lemann expects the battle over 209 to show. When the book ends with the apparent defeat of affirmative action, he doesn't draw the conclusion that the majority of the public in California had affirmed the legitimacy of the SAT and the meritocracy, though that might seem to be the obvious inference. The book does not really have an ending; it just comes to a stop.

And, of course, the story does go on. The subsequent decisions in Texas and California to link college admissions to high-school class rank, effectively undoing race-blind mandates, suggest that there is actually more political support for minority admissions than the California vote indicated. Recently, a controversy was touched off by news reports—misleading news reports, as it turned out—that ETS was going to introduce a Strivers' Score, adjusting SAT results for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As Lemann shows, this is an idea that has been stirring at ETS for a while, generating strong internal opposition. ETS says it has not made a decision about the proposal, which would not adjust SAT scores but rather provide separate data about test-takers' backgrounds. This would scarcely mean the end of meritocracy; it would be, at most, a minor aspect of a system that still overwhelmingly affirms the importance of the SAT and kindred tests.

IS THE SAT biased? Not in the sense of asking questions that give an unfair advantage to whites. But it is true, as critics point out, that test-prep courses and other coaching can raise SAT scores, and that families with low incomes are less able to afford such help. In that sense, there is indeed a socio-economic and racial bias in the results. But it is not at all clear that some other test would eliminate this problem. Moreover, the far greater deficit arises long before test-prep courses, early in a child's education and development. If the gap in scores between blacks and whites is to be remedied, this is surely where the principal effort should go.

In an afterword, Lemann calls for a more democratic educational policy, focused on improving the "bad bottom tier of public schools" and sending "most people all the way through college." Those are both sensible aims. But to get more people through college, Lemann suggests that we need "greater national authority over education," a "nationally agreed-upon curriculum," and tests for college admission on mastery of that curriculum. If, by "national authority," Lemann means federal control, this is certainly not going to happen any time soon, as the recent experience with curriculum standards suggests. There is scarcely a pedagogical issue that is not an ideological issue in America today. We do not enjoy the kind of consensus that a single national curriculum would require. Moreover, localism is deeply embedded in the history of American education; and with suspicion of the federal government still running high, this seems unlikely to be the time for centralizing decisions about what is learned in American schools.

It is conceivable, however, that a national curriculum might evolve through the kind of process that originally produced the SAT. High school students already take curriculum-based tests, such as the ACT, the SAT II tests, and tests for advance placement (AP) courses. Colleges might demand more tests of that kind instead of the SAT. But would that matter? Empirical research shows that reliance on curriculum-based tests would not select a substantially different group of students.

According to Wayne Camara, the executive director of research for the College Board, the correlation between the ACT and SAT is .88; the correlation between AP and PSAT scores ranges (depending on the AP subject) between .6 and .8, which indicates a strong relationship. In other words, much the same students do well on both tests. Relying on curriculum-based tests would not significantly change either the ranking of individual students or the ethnic composition of high and low scorers.

Still, greater reliance on curriculum-based tests could affect the incentives of teachers, students, and schools. On the positive side, a national curriculum test might help upgrade the performance of the worst schools, but it would also discourage curriculum innovation and diversity. American education is already in a testing frenzy, as business-minded leaders try to achieve greater teacher accountability and school accountability by tracking measurable results. Lemann's proposal risks going so far in this direction that the facets of education least amenable to testing, such as the arts, would suffer even more than they do now, and the country's entire educational system would be tuned to a single instrument.

IT IS IRONIC that Lemann should end his book by calling for a new testing system that would be more restrictive than the current one. In his afterword, he says that we should not have an anointed meritocracy at all, but it is hard to see why his alternative is less likely to produce one. His proposals do not grow out of his earlier historical analysis, and Lemann does not spell out who or what might actually bring about the change he wants. In his ideal of a "true meritocracy," the biggest rewards "would devolve to people only temporarily, and strictly on the basis of their performances ... The elite would be a group with a constantly shifting, rather than stable and permanent, membership." Actually, with constant shake-ups in the corporate world, things have already been moving in the direction of greater job insecurity, which should make Lemann happy. The biggest rewards today do seem to be flowing not to the meritocracy but to the entrepreneurs and the celebrities whom Lemann dubs "Talents," and membership in that world is constantly shifting. Even the elite grad-

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uates working in law firms and corporations whom Lemann calls "Mandarins" continually need to prove their worth. Most of them are scarcely coasting through life on their SAT scores. In fact, Lemann's term "Mandarins" does not capture the pressures and the uncertainties of contemporary professional lives (except, I am happy to say, for tenured university professors).

Fortunately, the value of *The Big Test* does not rest on Lemann's ideas about alternatives. The book's lesson may be the opposite of what its author intended: that the basic idea of social mobility through performance in education has become thoroughly established in America. Much of the leadership class in America will find other routes to the top, particularly through success in the marketplace, but in a society in which advanced skills and education count as heavily as they do in our society, the meritocracy is not going away. The house that Chauncey, Conant, and Kerr built looks like it is going to stand for a long time. ■

Unenlightenment

By P. N. Furbank

Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future by Neil Postman

(Knopf, 213 pp., $24)

The thesis of this book, by the professor of "Media Ecology" at New York University, is that, on the eve of the millennium, we are in a bad way. We are superstitious, some fifty percent of us believing that aliens have landed on earth. We are, as a result of the communications revolution, drowning in information, with less and less idea what to do with it. We are beset by a dangerous crew of deluded and sick people known as "deconstructionists." We lack what no human being can afford to lack, a "narrative" or transcendent story to give meaning to our world. We are, indeed, Eliot's "hollow men":

> No loom to weave facts into a fabric,
> people with no gods to serve, hollow and
> anxious, distrusting language, uncertain
> about even the most obvious features of
> reality, lacking conviction, suspicious of
> truth.

So where shall we look for "guidance about what to do and think in the twenty-first century," especially about our relationship to technology? We should turn our attention, says Neil Postman, to the eighteenth century. We shall find there ideas that we can "carry with confidence and dignity across the bridge to the twenty-first century." "They are not strange ideas. They are still close to us. They are not all that difficult to remember." Admittedly, though we can "carry" these ideas with us, we will not agree with all of them. The important thing about the men of the eighteenth century, Postman believes, is not that they arrived at the right answers, but that they asked the right questions.

The objection to this book of Postman's can be put rather starkly and simply. It follows from his remark that the ideas of the eighteenth century "are not all that difficult to remember." For nowhere does Postman seem to encourage his benighted audience actually to read eighteenth-century authors. To bolster us up for the twenty-first century, all that is necessary, it would appear, is to know what these authors "represented"—what things they were for, and what against, and this being a matter "not all that difficult to remember."

Now, it is certainly true that by thinking yourself deeply into the systems and ideas of Diderot, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, and Kant, which is far from being an easy task, it is true that you may, even in these days, learn a great deal. But any influence that these authors exerted on people who had not read them and did not intend to read them (and of course there will have been such influence) must have been exhausted two centuries ago. It would have been the creation of a historical moment and would have died with that moment. For that kind of influence, there can be no resurrection.

Here, in the chasm between direct influence and indirect influence, lies some of the trouble with the concept of "the Enlightenment," of which Postman is fond. He rightly points out that it derives from a mistranslation of the German definite article: *Die Aufklarung* means not "the Enlightenment" but simply "enlightenment." But, oddly, he does not draw the obvious inference: that to reify "enlightenment" and make a "movement" out of it is to create a chimera. It is to posit a unanimity that never existed, thereby spreading confusion and even discouraging people from reading these strange, deeply original, and highly complicated writers. It is so much easier, of course, to grasp what they had "represented" at second-hand.

When viewed from a very far distance, the eighteenth century may perhaps look fine, a nice homogeneous mass or Himalayan *massif*; but even from as close as the middle distance it begins to look very disorderly. The point is well illustrated in Postman's chapter on "Democracy." He claims, rightly, that it was in the eighteenth century that "democracy," traditionally a term of vilification, first came to be used in a neutral, or even sometimes a favorable, sense. On the strength of this semantic development, he credits the eighteenth century with giving the word the meaning that it has for us today. But this is to ignore a much more important issue which arose at the same time: the rights and wrongs of representative (as opposed to participatory) democracy. The full story is not as edifying as Postman thinks.

Montesquieu was very sympathetic to, and perceptive about, representative democracy, though he did not prescribe it as the one perfect polity. Diderot, on the other hand, and Voltaire (who described the reign of Louis XIV as "the most enlightened age the world has ever seen"), were not very interested in representative democracy, believing that more could be hoped from enlightened absolutism. As for Rousseau, he was violently hostile toward representative democracy, regarding all "representation" as a betrayal of personal autonomy. Yet he frankly admitted that participatory democracy, on the Swiss or Athenian model, was quite impracticable in a large, modern nation-state. For such a state, he argued with a certain relish, the only solution was autocracy. And so anyone trying to carry the ideas of the eighteenth century about democracy across the bridge to the twenty-first century will find that they have an awkward armful. Indeed, they might decide they would travel lighter without them.

P.N. Furbank's new book, *Behalf*, was recently published by the University of Nebraska Press.

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In his chapter on "Language," Postman finds a way round this problem of the heterogeneity of eighteenth-century ideas. He claims that it was in that century that a certain style of expository prose became a standard literary form. It is true that something recognizable as "exposition," he says, "predates the eighteenth century by several centuries." (One might put in a word here for Aristotle and Cicero.) But the success of Addison and Steele's *Spectator*, in Postman's account, was decisive.

> There followed an outpouring of exposition unequalled, to the present day, in scope, profundity, style, and usefulness. Jonathan Swift comes immediately to mind, with his *Proposals for Correcting the English Tongue* (in 1712), along with Bernard Mandeville's *Free Thoughts on Religion* (in 1720). After this deluge: Defoe, Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, Berkeley, William Penn, Franklin, Voltaire, Hume, Samuel Johnson, Diderot, Montesquieu, Madison, D'Alembert, Condillac, Kant, Burke, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Paine, Jefferson, Bentham—all of whom, and dozens of others, used exposition to give form to their ideas.

The heart of exposition, Postman tells us, is propositional language, and "the assumption that there exists an intelligible world of non-words: that is to say, 'reality'." There is a little problem about the latter with Berkeley, who saw no reason for positing an external world, and perhaps with Hume, who regarded the idea of cause and effect as no more than a prejudice. Still, apart from them, "Enlightenment philosophers did not doubt that language was capable of mapping reality," and this makes them more healthful companions, and the arch-enemies of deconstructionists.

But if our spiritual plight is as dire as Postman paints it, is lucid "exposition" by itself going to do much to effect a cure? And if it is, precisely whose exposition will save us—theirs (Swift, Mandeville and Co.) or our own? If theirs—I mean, if he expects us to sit down and read all these writers—it seems rather a long list, the more so that, as he admits, there were many further brilliant exponents of the art in the nineteenth century. There is the danger that one might give oneself too many models. But in truth Postman is not imagining us as reading them; the "assistance" that they, and the eighteenth century generally, are to give us is of another kind.

A word or two is needed about Postman's reflections on "Technology." He pictures eighteenth-century writers as scornful of a school superintendent who believed that the computer solved the problem of children's education. "Rousseau would have laughed at that, as would have Pestalozzi, the greatest educator of the eighteenth century. Voltaire would have written of it with his customary bile." He supposes that Franklin, Jefferson, and Tom Paine would have despised interactive television, and doorknobs that "understand" human speech, and that they would have asked the all-important question, "What is the problem to which this technology is the solution?" But they didn't; and for the obvious reason. Some of our perplexities are newer than the eighteenth century, and so it is to thinkers of the nineteenth century, such as Ruskin, Carlyle, and William Morris, that we must look for the beginnings of a searching criticism of technological "progress." In short, Postman's promise to show how the eighteenth century can help us proves illusory, and all we are left with is his reproaches to the twentieth century.

Postman certainly dislikes many things about our time: cloning, the Internet, the "information" economy, and the writings of Foucault, Barthes, and Baudrillard. He even regards it as a terrible reflection on our century that it produced Freud, and the "uncertainty" principle in physics. He likes to frame his reproaches in the form of questions (his book bristles with them), and one at least of these questions strikes me as by no means absurd. Indeed, it is potentially of great importance: "Can a representative democracy, even a participatory democracy, function well if its citizens' minds are not disciplined by the printed word? . . . . Is it possible that as print loses its dominance the underpinnings of a democratic polity crumble?"

Postman gives the point away by his rhetorical and indulgent "questioning." ("As we cross the bridge to the new century, shouldn't we at least chat about this?") But give it a more positive form, rephrase the question as saying that semiology, or the analysis of communication by images, is a discipline with an urgent task to accomplish, and it becomes extremely worth saying. Other questions of his are whether newspapers should not be expected to supply, not just information, but wisdom, and whether we should not teach children something about the very "art and science of asking questions." One cannot guess to whom these questions about the future of everything are addressed, or how they could ever lead to action. They are decent and well-meaning, but they drift in the air as lightly and aimlessly as thistledown. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 5

choice research is quantitative. The 40 percent figure for rational choice articles in the *American Political Science Review*, the discipline's leading journal, most likely results from the same error. The actual figure for rational choice articles is likely much lower. Additionally, many other journals exist, some of them downright hostile to rational choice theory.

Finally, Cohn fails to mention the influence of postmodernism on many other approaches to the social sciences. While postmodernism suggests that humans are entirely shaped by their culture, implicitly attributing human action to all manner of abstract causes except the individual herself, rational choice recognizes that humans do make choices, that they have the option of making intelligent decisions based on their own self-interests. Even if rational choice had nothing else to recommend it, as Cohn seems to believe, its status as a bastion against the dehumanizing theories of postmodernists would make it an invaluable part of the academy.

James E. Hanley
Department of Political Science
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

Jonathan Cohn replies:

Professor Hanley claims that I conflate rational choice scholarship with work that is merely quantitative, citing as evidence my assertion that rational choice methodology accounts for 40 percent of articles in the *American Political Science Review*. In fact, the 40 percent figure comes from the book *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, and it refers strictly to rational choice scholarship.

Baby battle

To the editors:

Mary Ann Mason's article on the "Adoption of Hugo" case in Massachusetts ("Fostering Family," August 30) is riddled with errors and inaccuracies. I should know, because I have been closely involved with Hugo's case since March 1996, representing Hugo's father through the eight-day trial in juvenile court as well as during the proceedings in the Appeals Court of Massachusetts, the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) of Massachusetts, and the petition for certiorari to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The juvenile court and the SJC did not award custody of Hugo to his paternal aunt because of their "biological ties," as Mason contends. Instead, the SJC affirmed the juvenile court's decision because the trial judge concluded that

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Hugo was more likely to "reach his greatest potential by living with his aunt than he would by remaining with his foster mother." Contrary to Mason's claim, no evidence was introduced, and no "doctors" testified, that Hugo's mental skills and emotional well-being were "improving" under the "nurturing attention" of his foster mother. Rather, the juvenile court found "no evidence that [the foster mother] work[ed] to improve [Hugo's] speech or address his developmental delays." Hugo's aunt, on the other hand, has a teenage son with similar developmental problems. Based on the aunt's intensive work with her son's medical, psychological, and scholastic demands, the juvenile court found that she had the "track record, talent, capability and desire" to address Hugo's "special needs, improve his development and be a strong advocate for him."

Despite the emotions that surround these issues, neither reason nor law suggests that "blood ties" should be paramount in custody cases. Sadly, life is not that simple. That is why the SJC specifically rejected the argument that Hugo should stay with his sister, who had been adopted by the foster mother. "We are not persuaded in this complex area of familial relationships that the judge should have given presumptive weight to the sibling relationship," the SJC held. "Rather, we adhere to our view that in child custody cases the best interests standard ... is a 'flexible one,' and the weight to be accorded its several considerations, including the importance of sibling relations, 'will vary with the circumstances.'"

The "best interests" of the child is the standard applied under Massachusetts law. Mason argues that "it's time to consider an alternative legal approach that begins with the rights of the children in question, rather than those of the parents fighting for custody." But that legal approach already exists. The law does not sublimate a child's "best interests" to the rights of parents.

In any event, five-year-old Hugo does not need any more "help" from the legal system, as Mason suggests. Hugo moved in with his aunt and his cousins last January, and he is eating well, speaking clearly, and behaving like other children his age. He talks to his sister every week. And, most important, Hugo now receives both the love and the attention that everyone agrees he needs.

SUSAN F. DROGIN
Boston, Massachusetts

MARY ANN MASON REPLIES:
As attorney for Hugo's father (who had been declared unfit), Susan F. Drogin certainly must have been witness to the emotions that surround these issues. But, contrary to Drogin's allegation that there was no evidence that Hugo was improving in the care of his foster mother, the appellate court was convinced by the recommendation of the Department of Social Services (DSS)—supported by the testimony of four witnesses and other evidence—that Hugo was, in fact, doing well with his foster mother, and it overturned the trial court's decision, an unusual step for an appellate court. In its decision, the appellate court described Hugo's extensive developmental problems (possibly caused by his mother's use of cocaine while pregnant) and stated that Hugo had thrived in the home of Enid, his foster mother, who also cared for his sister, Gloria. The court went on to describe the attachment between Hugo and Enid: "Hugo calls Enid 'Mommy,' and has bonded to her." It concluded, "In light of those facts, the case for the DSS plan of adoption with Enid was that it confirmed a custodial arrangement that was not 'broke' and it would be a mistake to 'fix it.' In addition ... a change would infallibly traumatize an already fragile child."

This decision, as reported in my article, was later reversed by the Massachusetts Supreme Court, which affirmed the trial court's decision to place Hugo with his aunt. The aunt's major strength, according to the trial court, was that she had successfully raised her own developmentally delayed child. Nonetheless, she had never parented Hugo.

The point of my article was to underscore the ambiguous and precarious position of foster parents and others who serve as parents for children who are not biologically "theirs," such as stepparents, adopting parents, and gay and lesbian parents. These people do a good deal of the nation's child-rearing, yet they are often brushed aside by the courts in favor of blood relatives. Unlike Drogin, I do not believe that the "best interests" of the child are always served in these circumstances. In Hugo's case, neither did the appeals court. ■

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BORDERLANDS DIARIST

On the Road

I HAD EVERYTHING I NEEDED for a long drive: new shocks and brakes and belts and other mysteriously expensive parts for my trusty old Volvo, an international passport for my dog, and someone to share the driving. That someone was my father, a man so experienced in taking road trips through what used to be the Soviet Union that he called ahead to check that there were roads and gas stations along our planned route. The journey, which would also include my father's new wife, was supposed to take us from Moscow through Ukraine to Moldova, where my father would meet his new father-in-law, then back through Ukraine to Hungary and, finally, Vienna. As it turned out, our route contained both roads and gas stations. There were even convenience stores and roadside cafés. But, sadly, these are not the only post-Soviet industries that have sprung up to milk the long-distance driver.

THE TROUBLE BEGINS AT THE BORders, the lines of demarcation between the old empire and the new states with their newly impoverished residents. These borders have neither the murderous order of the old Soviet frontier nor the nonchalance of the soon-to-be-extinct borders of Western Europe. Here they make it up as they go along, using criteria even they cannot define to determine how long a traveler should be held up and how much lighter her wallet should be afterward.

NEGOTIATING THE RUSSIAN CHECKpoint at the Russian-Ukrainian border consumed three hours and relieved me of a mere $10—a toll on my dog. The three and a half hours on the Ukrainian side, though, cost me my father. As Russian citizens, my stepmother and I did not need visas to enter Ukraine. But my father, a U.S. citizen, needed a transit visa to pass through the country. The Ukrainian embassy in Washington had assured him the visa would be issued at the border. The embassy had been wrong. A border guard put my father in the car of a Greek man headed for Moscow. The Greek man was complaining loudly that the Ukrainian traffic police had drained him of all his savings; he said he couldn't wait to get to Moscow. Alas, his dream would not come true: he passed through the Ukrainian checkpoint, but Russian customs refused to allow his car across the border. My father had to hitchhike the 500 kilometers back to Moscow, where he caught a flight to the Moldovan capital of Chisinau (formerly Kishinev) and met his father-in-law. My stepmother and I didn't have it so easy.

WE ENCOUNTERED OUR FIRST OBSTAcle just 35 kilometers into Ukraine, at a traffic-police post manned by an officer named Khaliavka, which, as it happens, means "freeloader" in Russian. Khaliavka commenced an exaggeratedly careful examination of my car documents, comparing the many numbers and letters on my registration card to the many numbers and letters on the vehicle identification tag under the hood. Sure enough, he found a discrepancy—or at least a possible discrepancy. As he saw it, the tag under the hood included a "k," whereas the corresponding letter on the registration card, produced on a dot-matrix printer, could be read as an "r." Khaliavka solicited the opinions of a fellow officer and other drivers, asking, "Does this 'r' look like a 'k' to you?" The nearly unanimous response was that it didn't. One driver did suggest, however, that "the printing may not be so clear." But this merely enraged Khaliavka. He announced that he would seize my car and put it in the lot. "And no car," he added gravely, "has ever left this lot." Indeed, there were many nice cars in the lot, mostly four-wheel-drive vehicles; the vision of my ten-year-old Volvo trapped next to them was especially depressing.

"I HAVE A DOG," I PLEADED. "WE'LL put her in a cage and feed her," Khaliavka responded. "We are two women, and we are carrying a lot of luggage," I said, trying to appeal to his sense of chivalry. But this didn't move him, either. Finally, as a last resort, I blurted out, "I have my father's wife with me." Unexpectedly, this worked. It was not the fact that I was taking a road trip with my stepmother that touched Khaliavka—it was that my stepmother, 31 years old, is a year younger than I am. Fascinated, the police officer pulled me into his office, where he and his partner interrogated me about the looks, age, and physical shape of the man who'd snatched such a young wife. They shook their heads and clucked their tongues, concluding, over my unconvincing objections, that "the man only has two or four years left—a man can't go on forever—but good for him for making the best of it!" My father is a mere 54 years old, but then the average life expectancy for Russian men is only 58. Out of respect for my father's prowess, the officers let me off with a "fine" that equaled approximately $5.

THE RATE STAYED MORE OR LESS constant through the rest of the journey, but the ways of extracting it varied. I came to like being fined for speeding. It was fast and painless: a post bearing the number 40 (that's about 25 miles per hour) would appear on the side of the highway, followed by a traffic cop. Two minutes and $5 later, I'd be on my way. The rare delays were caused by the cops' surprise at encountering a woman driver. One cop, seeing me get out from behind the wheel with my documents in hand, inquired politely, "Where is the driver?" Still, business is business, and "fines" were collected without regard for gender. In both Moldova and Ukraine, in addition to speeding, I paid a $5 tax "for the ecology." This did not, however, save me from being fined an additional $5 by the Moldovan Ecological Police, who did not like the tint of my exhaust. On the way through the Pridnestr Republic—a disputed area near the Ukrainian-Moldovan border, where order is maintained by Russian peacekeeping troops—I was hit up twice. Peacekeepers guarding a bridge warned that they would have to open everything in my trunk "to look for explosives." Five dollars later, they lost interest. On the other side of the bridge, a seemingly identical group of peacekeepers asked, "Did Moscow send us anything?" "I gave on the other side," I replied, and they relented. The most polite practitioner of the extortion game, however, was a police officer in the Odessa region of Ukraine. He showed me a copy of a local law that imposed a $25 "road fee." I felt I should be compensated for driving my car on what they call roads, but I paid. The next driver protested that he did not have that much money, and the officer kindly agreed to take whatever he had.

IN MOLDOVA, WHERE WE WERE finally reunited with my father, I resolved to alter the remainder of our route. Instead of going through Ukraine to get to Hungary, we would go through Romania. Of course, this meant a day and a half of driving on switchback mountain roads clogged with horse-drawn carriages. But it was worth it. My final experience of extortion, on the Romanian side of the Romanian-Moldovan border, was the happiest. There, I paid $5 for bringing the dog and $5 for "disinfection"—they sprayed chlorine solution on my car.

MASHA GESSEN

MASHA GESSEN is chief correspondent for *Itogi*, the Russian partner to *Newsweek*.

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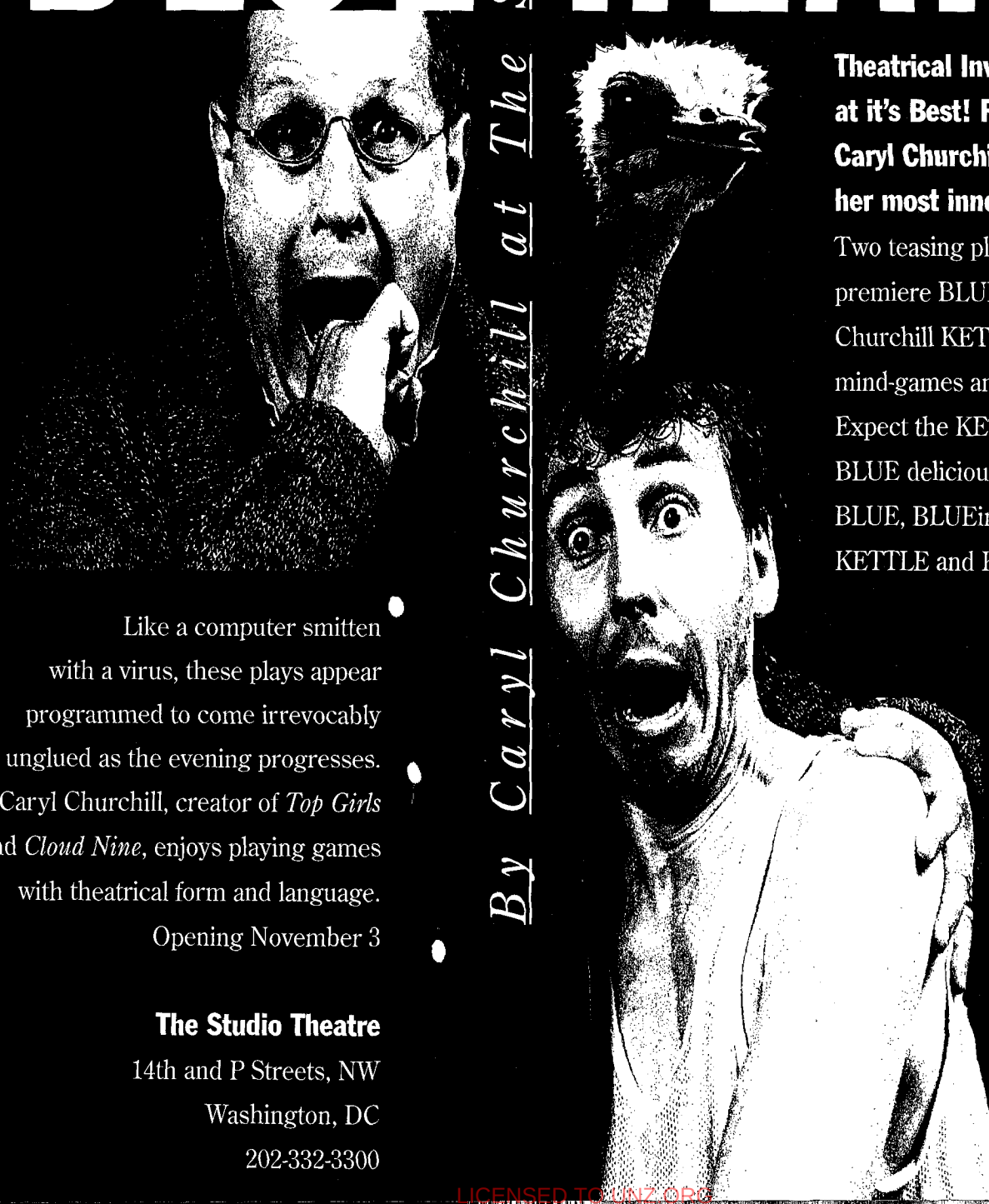

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